

**Epilogue  
of  
Mahabharata**

**By**

**M. R. Yardi**



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( Part I )

Dedicated to

Dr. V. S. Sukthankar

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the only sound basis for all Mahabharata studies, nay for all studies connected in the epic literature of India." Winternitz was convinced that "a Critical Edition of the Mahabharata was sine qua non for all historical and critical research regarding the great epic of India."

When the Critical Edition of the Adiparva was completed by Dr. V. S. Sukthankar in 1933, it was hailed as 'the most important event in the history of Sanskrit Philology since the publication of Max Muller's Edition of the Rigveda with Sayana's commentary.'<sup>1</sup> The Critical Edition contained a complete critical apparatus, giving not only the constituted text, but also the variant readings of the MSS. utilised and spurious passagees which were excluded from the constituted text, the latter being shown in the critical notes and the Appendices. Dr. Sukthankar further appended a prolegomena to this edition, in which he gave a full account of the MSS. available, their classification and the principles followed in the constitution of the text. This was fortunate as he lived to complete the work of only the Aranyakaparva. The work relating to other parvas was completed by 1966, with matching zeal and scholarship, by his successors in accordance with the principles laid down by him. A student of Mahabharata has now available to him a critical edition based on an extensive and carefully selected manuscript material collected from all over India.<sup>2</sup>

In his foreword to my book, *The Mahabharata: Its Genesis and Growth*, Dr. R. N. Dandekar observes as follows:

"The transmission of the Mahabharata is characterized by a truly bewildering mass of versions and subversions. Indeed, no other work illustrates the dictum 'as many manuscripts so many texts' more aptly than the Great Epic." This phenomenon of luxuriant growth and indiscriminate fusion of versions can be explained only on the assumption that after its composition the Mbh. had in the course of all those centuries,

been handed down in different forms and sizes from bard to bard through oral tradition and that, therefore, no special care had been taken to guard its text against partial corruption and elaboration or against arbitrary emendation and normalization. Even in its early phases the Mbh. text tradition seems to have been not uniform and singular but multiple and polygamous. And this is, indeed, what is to be expected of a work which has proved to be a vital force in the life of a dynamic people."

We are now in a position to state what the critically constituted text is. Dr. Sukthankar himself (CSM, p. 236) described it as a modest attempt to present a version of the epic as old as the extant manuscript material would permit us to reach with some semblance of confidence. He was candid enough to admit that the Vilgate text of the epic is fairly readable and will appear in many places to be even better than the critical text. For this he gave the reason that the former had been purged by the continuous amendments made by the scribes for centuries. However, he claimed that the critical text had one merit in that it was 'cleaned' of puerile modern accretions and obvious errors of repetitions which lengthen and weaken the text.

1. Winternitz, AROI, Vol. XV, 1934, p. 159.

2. MGG. Introduction, p. vii.

1. Winternitz, ABOPI, Vol. XV, 1934, p. 159.

## ABBREVIATIONS

- Mbh. - Mahabharata ( Critical Edition ).
- ABORI - Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune.
- Ait.Br. - Aitareya Brahmana.
- AV. - Atharvaveda.
- BORI - Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.
- Gita; B. G. - Bhagavadgita.
- BGS. - Bhagavadgita as a Synthesis.
- Br. Up. - Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.
- BSOAS. - Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London.
- Chh.Up. - Chhandogya Upanishad.
- CSM - Critical Studies in the Mahabharata, Vol-1. 1944.
- EHVS - Early History of the Vaishnava Sect by H.C. Raichaudhuri.
- ERE - Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics ed. by Hastings.
- HD - History of Dharmashastra by P.V. Kane.
- HIL - History of Indian Literature by M. Winternitz.
- Jai.Br. - Jaiminiya Brahmana.
- JRAS - Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, London.
- MD - Mokshadharma.
- MGG - Mahabharata : Its Genesis and Growth. A statistical study, by the author.

- MS. - Manusmriti.  
Mund Up. - Mundaka Upanishad.  
NS - Nyayashastra  
Pr. Up. - Prashna Upanishad  
RB - Ramanuja Bhashya.  
RV - Rigveda  
Shat. Br. - Shatapatha Brahmana.  
ShB. - Shankara Bhashya.  
SBG - Shrimad Bhagavadgita by S. K. Belwalkar.  
SEP - Studies in Epics and Puranas of India by A. D. Pusalkar  
Tai. Sam. - Taittariya Samhita.  
Tai. Br. - Taittariya Brahmana.  
Tai. Up. - Taittariya Upanishad.  
Shv. Up. - Shvetashvara Upanishad.  
VMT - Vedic Mythological Tracts by R. N. Dandekar.  
VSM MRS - Vaishnavism, Shaivism and Minor Religious Systems by R. G. Bhandarkar.

In order to distinguish the contents of Bharata of Vaishampayana from the portions added by Suta, Sauti, Harivamshakara and the author of the Parvasangraha, the former is designated as VM; while the latter are denoted by SM, M. ( Sauti ), HM, PM respectively.

## Epilogue of Mahabharata

## Adhyaya - 1

### INTRODUCTION

When the Critical Edition of the Adiparva of the Mahabharata was completed by Dr. V. S. Sukthankar in 1933, it was hailed as 'the most important event in the history of sanskrit philology, since the publication of Max Muller's edition of the Rigveda with Sanana's commentary.'<sup>1</sup> The Critical Edition contained a complete critical apparatus, giving not only the constituted text, but also the variant readings of the MSS. utilised and spurious passages which were excluded from the constituted text, the latter being shown in the critical notes and the appendices. Dr. Sukthanakar appended a prolegomena to this edition, in which he gave a full account of the MSS. available, their classification and the principles followed in the constitution of the text. This was fortunate as he lived to complete only another parva, the Aranyaka. The work relating to the other parvas was completed by 1966, with matching zeal and scholarship, by his successors in accordance with the principles laid down by him. A student of this great epic of India has now available to him; a really critical edition of the Mbh. based on an extensive and carefully Ms. material collected from all over India.

1. Winternitz, ABORI, Vol. XV, 1934, p. 159.

It became obvious that the critically constituted text was not the original Bharata, which was recited by Vaishampayana at the snake sacrifice of king Janamejaya. Dr. Sukthankar himself did not claim that it was reconstruction of the Ur. Mahabharata. It is stated in the epic itself that this original text did not contain any episodes or legends and consisted of only 24,000 stanzas. On the other hand, the critically constituted text has a dimension which is more than three times the size of the original Bharata as given in the epic. Furthermore, passages which are suspected to be interpolations on intrinsic grounds, such as the childish stories of the old maid and the five Indras,<sup>1</sup> remotely connected if at all, with the Bharata war, had to be retained in the constituted text, as they are to be found in all versions. As observed by Winternitz, these interpolations must have come to be added at some earlier period to which the manuscript tradition did not reach back. A different approach was, therefore, needed to identify such earlier interpolations and recover the original Bharata. It was thought that the statistical approach would enable us to go a step further than the Critical Edition and identify not only the original Bharata but also the interpolations which came to be made thereafter.

A statistical analysis of the Anushtubh style in the Mbh. Critical Edition has disclosed, by the application of the tests of homogeneity, five styles, which are significantly different from one another. According to the internal evidence in the Mbh. the number of compilers too is five corresponding to the five different styles found in the epic by the statistical study. Among them the adhyayas belonging to one style give a self-contained but a bare account of the Bharata war and the number of verses which they contain comes close enough to 24,000. This is the Bharata of Vaishampayana, which was later expanded by four bards, Suta, Sauti, the Harivamshakara and the author of the Parvasangraha. It has also been possible to determine the successive additions made by these later redactors by the same method ( MGG, pp. VII, VIII ).

1. Ibid, p. 174.

The later redactors have also enriched the epic by the additions of legends and folklore. In the additions made by Suta, we come across such legends as those of Agastya, Rishyashringa, Mandhatru, Jantu, Shyenakapotiya and Ashtavakra ( Aranyaka ) and of Galava ( Udyoga ). Among the more important legends added by Sauti are those of Sunda and Upasunda ( Adi ), Savitri and Satyavan ( Aranyaka ), and of Viduraputranushasana ( Udyoga ), Muchakunda, Chirakarika, and Kundadhara ( Shanti ), Nachiketa ( Anushasana ) and Uttanka ( Ashvamedhika ). Harivamshakara has added the Nalopakhyan, the story of the Deluge, the Matsyopakhyan, the tale of the frog girl and the Ramopakhyan ( Aranyaka ), Sarasvatopakhyan ( Shalya ) and Narada's visit to the Shvetadvipa ( Shanti ). As pointed out by the Critical Editor and further confirmed by internal evidence, the Ramopakhyan has close parallels with Valmiki's original Ramayana indicating that the latter was used as a source by the Harivamshakara.

These redactors have further enriched the epic by incorporating in it many passages dealing with politics, religion and philosophy. Suta has added the Viduraniti and the Sanatsujatiya ( Udyoga ), Shukanuprashna and the dialogues of Bharadvaja with Bhrigu and Janaka ( not necessarily the same as epic Janaka ) with Vasishtha, Bhrigu, Yajnavalkya and Panchashikha ( Shanti ), Dhritarashtra's advice to Yudhisthira on the duties of a king ( Ashramavasika ). Suta has dealt with the Sankhya and Yoga doctrines which had gained considerable popularity in his days. Additions made by Sauti include the Janbukhandavinirmanaparva, the Bhuparva, the Bhagavadgita ( Bhishma ), most of the passages in the Rajadharma and most of the philosophical passages in the Mokshadharma ( Shanti ) and the passages dealing with danadharma ( Anushasana ). The Harivamshakara has added the Shukanucharita and the famous Naranarayaniya section ( Shanti ). The Naranarayaniya section recounts the visit of Narada to Shvetadvipa, where he met god Narayana and received from him instruction in the Pancharatra religion of the satvatas. The author of the Parvasangraha has added the dialogue of Sulabhaa with Janaka and that of Shuka

with Vyasa ( Shanti ). He has further dealt with various kinds of fasts and their rewards and recounted the thousand names of god Vishnu ( Anushasana ).

Suta Lomaharshana has made two important changes in the story of the Mbh., firstly his composition shows a clear bias in favour of the Pandavas and against the Kauravas. For instance, Suta has incorporated two incidents in the Mbh. story to extenuate, if not condone, some of the palpably wrong actions of the Pandavas. The adhyayas 56 and 57 of the Sabhaparva tell us how Yudhishthira, after losing his wealth and kingdom, staked himself, his brothers and his wife, Draupadi, and how after he lost this game too, Draupadi was brought to the audience hall of king Dhritarashtra by Dushyasana in a half-naked condition while she was in her menses. This incident has been added to justify the two barbarous acts of Bhima, namely drinking the blood of Dushyasana and striking Duryodhana below the navel against the rules of mace-fight. If Jayadratha was killed by a strategem after the sunset, did he not try to abduct Draupadi and deserve it ? These two incidents have been responsible for evoking universal sympathy for the Pandavas. Secondly, Suta spoke of Pandavas as having performed the ashvamedha sacrifice, of which there is no mention in the Vaishampayana text. Suta seems to have been a bard in the court of a great king in the line of Purus. Evidently, this great king could not bear to think that his illustrious ancestors should go down in history without an ashvamedha sacrifice to their credit. In chapter X - MGG, this king has been identified as king Prasenjit of Kosala, who was a contemporary of Buddha ( MGG, p. 130 ).

Sauti has further brought about a still more fundamental transformation of the epic. To him the Bharata was not merely a fratricidal war between Kauravas and Pandavas, but the struggle for supremacy between the good and the evil. The Pandavas are depicted as god-fearing and urgent devotees of Lord Krishna, now deified as an incarnation of god Vishnu. The oldest Pandava, Yudhishthira is known as Dharmaraja, a just and

righteous king, ever desirous to know what is right and wrong and meticulous about doing the right thing. This is how a number discourses on dharma, niti and moksha have found their way in the epic. Most of the political and philosophical passages such as Rajadharma, the Bhagavadgita and much of the mokshadharma and dharma in the Anushasanaparva, have been added by Sauti. It is because of this that J. Dahalman and A. Ludwig question the authenticity of the war and interpret the epic as an allegory in which the Kauravas and the Pandavas symbolise the dharma and adharma or light and darkness respectively.

Sauti has brought about another important change in the epic, which was to project Arjuna as a great war hero and Krishna as his divine guide. The divinity of Lord Krishna is left in no doubt and all except Duryodhana and his close circle are made to acknowledge it. After dealing with the Bhargava legends, Dr. Sukthankar concluded, "The infiltration of masses of Bhargava material in the shape of the Bhargava myths and legends, the manner of its treatment and even that strange admixture of the epich with dharma and niti elements, which has puzzled many enquirers into the genesis of the Mbh. thus appears to find a simple and straightforward explanation in the assumption of an important unitary diascuasis of the epic under very strong and direct Bhargava influence ( CSM p. 336 ). There is no doubt that the whole text of the epic was recast by Suta and Sauti under the strong influence of Shaunaka, whom Sauti addresses as Bhargava ( I.16.6 ) and Bhrigunandana ( I.27.35 ).

We are now in a position to state what the critically constituted text is. Dr. Sukthankar himself described it as a modest attempt to present a version of the epic as old as the extant manuscript material would permit us to reach with some semblance of confidence. He was candid enough to admit that the vulgate text of the Mbh. was fairly readable and would appear to be even ' better than the Critical Text '. For this he gave the

reason that the former had been purged by the continuous amendments made by scribes for centuries. He, however, claimed that the constituted text had one merit, namely that it was 'cleaned of puerile modern accretions and obvious errors of repetitions, which lengthen and weaken the text.'

It would be worthwhile to repeat here Sukthankar's view about the objective of Mbh. textual criticism. He observed that the Mbh. is not and never was a fixed and rigid text, but a fluctuating epic tradition, a theme avec variation, not unlike a popular Indian melody. Our objective should be consequently not to arrive at an archetype ( which practically never existed ) but to represent and view and explain the epic tradition in all its variety, in all its fulness, in all the ramifications. The statistical studies disclose how this epic tradition was built up principally by Vaishampayana, Suta, Sauti, the Harivamshakara and the author of the Parvasangraha. In fact the constituted text appears to comprise the text of Vaishampayana inclusive of the additions made thereto by the above mentioned authors. It contains 6546 stanzas less than the Parvasangraha figure of 82136 stanzas. This means that the Critical Editors of Mbh. have succeeded in retrieving 92 percent of the Mbh. version, which the author of the Parvasangraha had before him, which by any standards, is a truly remarkable achievement.

The epic tradition as recorded in the first adhyaya ( verse 25 ) of the Adiparva states that Vyasa's work is available in an expanded version as well as in a short version. The Ashvalayana sutras also mention the work called Mahabharata as well as Bharata. The status of the work is also variously described as itivritta ( verse 14 ) and itihasa ( verse 16 ), both meaning history, then as purana ( verse 15 ), as upanishad ( verse 19 ) and finally as veda ( verse 204 ), giving an indication of its growth. Now the expanded version of the epic could not have been composed by Vyasa, as it exhibits five different styles. Obviously, the subsequent bards too thought it prudent to claim the authorship and authority of Vyasa for the expanded version as well as the shorter version. The shorter version Bharata is not

extant now, although it has been possible to retrieve it by the application of statistical tests. This shorter version was merely a war chronicle and had it remained so, it would have passed into limbo of oblivion like the epic of Gilgmesh; in its expanded form, however, it underwent a qualitative change and became a miscellany of mythology, politics, theology and philosophy. It is now cherished by all Hindus as a cultural heritage, as it contains a record of the social, political and cultural changes that took place in Aryavarta during the first millennium B. C. Moreover, with the incorporation of the Dharma and Niti elements in it, it has become the object of veneration as a shruti text or even as the fifth Veda ( MGG. XIII. XIV ).

Adhyaya - 2

## HISTORICAL LAYERS OF THE EPIC

According to traditional belief, the Mahabharata has undergone a metamorphosis from 8800 verses of Jaya through 24,000 stanzas of Bharata to the present text of one lakh stanzas over a period of time. Sauti describes the status of the work variously as itivritta as also ithasa, both meaning history (verses 14, 16), as purana (verse 15) and finally as Veda (XII, 204). The Critical Edition itself mentions that the Bharata of Vaishampayana consisted of 24,000 stanzas, which came to be expanded to 82,000 verses according to the count given in the Parvasangraha (I.2). Ashvalayana, the author of the Grihyasutra (3.4.4) mentions a work called the Mahabharata in addition to Bharata. According to Winternitz, the Mahabharata is not the work of a single author, but a whole literature stretching over a long period.<sup>1</sup>

It was thought that it should be possible to determine whether the Mahabharata had a uniform style or different styles by the applications of the statistical tests. The statistical studies were carried out over a period of ten years and their results were published under the title The Multiple Authorship of the Mahabhrata : A Statistical Approach, from time to time in the Journal of the Asiatic Society, Bombay and the Annals of the

Bhandarkar Research Institute, Pune. The results of this study in a book-form were published by the Institute in its Research Unit Series No. 7 under the title The Mahabhrata : Its Genesis and Growth : A Statistical Study (MGG). During the first 75 years of existence only seven such works had come to be published in this series. The statistical studies undertaken by the author are now included in the Appendices of the MGG as Papers I to VI.

Such a study had been made possible by the happy circumstance that the epic has been composed for the most part in the anushtubh meter, which has a flexible pattern. Although there are several varieties of this meter, the one in common use has the fifth syllable short, the sixth long and the seventh alternately long and short, in each pada with a few permissible variations. A syllable is long if it contains a long vowel or a short vowel followed by a conjunct consonant. Instead of the padas it was found more convenient to take the lines (shlokardhas), each consisting of two padas i.e. sixteen syllables each. Then each line will have the fifth, the thirteenth and the fifteenth syllables short and the sixth, seventh and fourteenth long. The stylistic variations in the anushtubh shlokas could arise by the author's unconscious use of long or short syllables in those positions where they are free to do so.

The statistical study proceeds in two stages. First we select a group of adhyayas relating to a definite event or topic and count the number of lines as well as the number of long syllables in each of the ten positions where they can be either long or short. It is obvious that we have to leave out all adhyayas, which consist wholly or mainly of long metre stanzas, which have a rigid metrical form and to exclude the prose passagees. I have also left out the few adhyayas which had less than ten anushtubh shlokas, but now find that their inclusions would have made no difference to the final result. The count of long syllables for each adhyaya in a group will give a two-way distribution of long syllables according to the ten positions and the adhyayas.

1. Winternitz, HIL, pp. 316-326.

Then we apply a statistical method known as the Analysis of Variance. The beauty of this method is that one can separate the total sum of squares according to the sources of variation. The Analysis of Variance is strictly applicable to normal distribution. But it is also found to be valid for non-normal distributions which for large samples approach the normal. Since the syllables can be either short or long in ten positions, the distribution is a multinomial one, which for large samples approaches the normal. The total sum of squares is separated into two parts ( i ) due to variation between the adhyayas and ( ii ) due to variation within the adhyayas. In order to eliminate the effect of the sizes of the adhyayas, it was found necessary to calculate the sum of squares due to regression of the adhyaya means on the number of lines and deduct it from the sum of squares due to variation between the adhyayas. The remainder gives the sum of squares due to deviations from the regression and by dividing it by the appropriate degrees of freedom, we get an estimate of the variance between the adhyayas after making allowance for the different sizes of the adhyayas. Then the estimate of variance between the adhyayas after allowing for regression is compared with the estimate of variance within the adhyayas. If their quotient is less than the 5 per cent value of F for their respective degrees of freedom, the variation between the adhyayas is not at all significant and does not justify the assumption of different authorship. The application of this method to Bhagavadgita shows that all the eighteen adhyayas in it have the same style and the statistical analysis does not support the multiple authorship of the Bhagavadgita.<sup>1</sup>

In order to test whether the variance due to variation of two different groups of adhyayas is due to chance variation or significantly different, we apply a modified F test given by Snedecor ( p.209 ). F is calculated as the quotient of the larger variance by the smaller and then the probability is doubled. This follows from the fact that the F so calculated is always

1. MGG, Paper I-A, pp. 171-175.

greater than 1, so that only the upper part of the distribution is used. In order to test the homogeneity of the two groups at 5% level, the ordinary table giving the five per cent points of distribution of F is not useful. We must have a table giving 2.5 percent points of distribution of F. Such a table is given by Bawkef and Lieberman in their book Engineering Statistics. They have also given a formula for calculating the 2.5 percent points of F. If the calculated value of F is less than the tabular or formula value, then the two groups do not differ significantly. If, however, this value exceeds the tabular or formula value, the two groups are significantly different.

By applying the same method it was found that the adhyayas 1.22 and 61-70 of the Bhishmaparva had the same style as the Bhagavadgita. It was also found that the remaining adhyayas 41-61, 71-94 and 95-117<sup>1</sup> belonged to the same style and this style was entirely different from the style of the Bhagavadgita. Since the Bhishmaparva contains a record of the Bharata war in which Bhishma was the first commander, we shall call this style the A style and the style of the Bhagavadgita the B style. The Dronaparva contains 106 adhyayas in the A-style and 62 adhyayas in the B-style excluding five adhyayas which contain wholly or mainly long metre stanzas ( MGG, pp. 177, 178 ). In the Karnaparva, which contains in all 69 adhyayas, 58 adhyayas belong to the A-style and remaining 11 adhyayas contain wholly or mainly long metre stanzas ( MGG, 165 ). The Shalyaparva contains 64 adhyayas, of which 1-32<sup>2</sup>, 55-58 and 60-64 belong to A-style and 33-54, 59 belong to a style, which is distinct from the two styles A and B. We shall call this C style ( MGG-178, 179 ). In Sauptikaparva which consists of 18 adhyayas, of which adhyayas 1-10 belong to the A-style and the adhyayas 11-18 belong to a style which is distinct from the three styles A, B and C. We shall call this Alpha style ( MGG, p. 166 ). The Adiparva contains 225

1. Excluding Adhyayas 56, 76, 81 as containing wholly or mainly long metre stanzas.  
2. Excluding 19 as containing wholly or mainly long metre stanzas.

adhyayas of which adhyayas 55-57 belong to the A-style, adhyayas 124-199<sup>1</sup> belong to the Alpha group, while adhyayas, 4-54, 58-123 and 200-225 belong to the B group. Adhyayas 1-3 belong to a still different style, which we shall designate as the Beta style and as it contains the Parvasangraha, we shall call the author of this style, the author of the Parvasangraha. The statistical study thus shows that the Mahabharata has been composed by five different authors in five distinct styles.

Of the parvas which exhibit a single style, Karnaparva is composed in the A-style, while the Striparva, Ashvamedhika, the Mausala, the Mahaprasthanika as also the Swargarohana exhibit the Alpha style. Of the six parvas which disclose two styles, Sabha and Virata have the Alpha and Beta styles. Bhishma and Drona have A and B styles. Shalya A and C styles and the Sauptika A and Alpha styles. The Aranyaka and the Anushasana parvas exhibit three styles. Alpha, B and C styles. The Adiparva discloses the four styles excepting the C-style, while the Shantiparva contains all the five styles. The Bhagavadgita has a single style, the B-style, while the Harivamsha, which forms the supplement of the epic discloses the C-style, with the exception of twelve adhyayas ( See MGG. p. 60 ).

In the Adiparva, the adhyayas 55-57 belong to the A-style. Adhyaya 55 enumerates briefly all the events which befell the Pandavas before their return from exile. These together with the first seven parvas beginning with Bhisma and ending with Sauptika give an account of the Bharata war, in their A-style adhyayas. The Adhyayas 59 of Rajadharma and 135-151 of the Apaddharma in the Shantiparva and the adhyayas 1-17, 125-134 of danadharma and 153 of Bhishmasvargarohana in the Anushasana parva also belong to the A-style.

Thus by the successive application of this method we

have discovered five styles which are significantly different from one another. It may be noted that these variances differ from one another not only marginally but significantly. The Mahabharata itself mentions that Harivamsha forms a supplement ( khila ) to it.<sup>1</sup> The Harivamsha exhibits the C-style except for twelve adhyayas including the Ushaparva which belong to the Beta style.

Before we accept these five styles as belonging to different authors, we have to see whether the author's style has undergone a change over time and if so, we have to make adequate allowance for this change before drawing any conclusions about their authorship. We, however, find that four of these styles with the exception of C style are represented in the Adiparva, while all the five styles are represented in the Shantiparva. Every other parva exhibits two or three of these styles. This would indicate that the author's styles have not undergone any change over time. Secondly the variations in style may be due to changes in the subject-matter, as the author may have one style for a narrative and another style for didactic and philosophical matters. It has been found that the adhyayas written in the alpha style contain episodes, myths and legends as also philosophical passages such as Santasujatiya, Anugita, the dialogues between Vasistha, Yajnavalkya and Panchashikha with the Janaka kings in the Mokshandharma. Likewise the B-style adhyayas consist of Bhargava episodes, the Bhagavadgita and the major portions of Rajadharma and Mokshadharma. This shows that these styles have not varied with changes in subject-matter. In view of this, there is no doubt that these five different styles represent five different authors of the epic.

Mahabharata scholars hold different views regarding the relative chronology of Ramayana and Ramopakhyana, which has been incorporated by Harivamshakara in the Ramayana. Jacobi, Winternitz down to Sukthankar held the view that the Ramayana was composed earlier than the Ramopakhyana.

1. Excluding adhyayas 178, 182-186, 189 and 190, which consist of wholly or mainly of long metre stanzas.

1. MB - I - 2.233.

Jacobi was the first to express the view that Ramopakhyana was a careless abridgment of the Rama epic as we have it. He pointed out a dozen passages which Ramopakhyana had in common with the Ramayana. After consulting the Nirnayasagara edition ( 1888 ) of the Mahabharata Sukthankar had found 86 concordances between the two consisting of 112 padas. He had also found that the number of common padas in the Saugandhikaharana was 38, while it was 80 in the case of Nalopakhyana, which has an entirely different theme unconnected with the Ramayana. He observed that it was unlikely, nay almost impossible, that Adikavi Valmiki would borrow a few verses from Nalopakhyana.<sup>1</sup>

In my study of the Mahabharata ( MGG. p. 137 ), I had stated that more definite conclusions about the interrelationship between the two epics must await a similar study of the Critical Edition of the Ramayana. Fortunately the Critical Edition of the Ramayana prepared by the Oriental Institute of the M.S. University of Baroda was available for this study. This study which was undertaken by the author has been published in the form of a book, *The Ramayana, its Origin and Growth, A statistical Study*, in the Bhandarkar Oriental Series, No. 26 in 1994. This study showed that Valmiki composed the nucleus of Ramayana in style R which is different from all styles of the Mahabhrata. It contains only the story of the Ramayana war, which Rama waged with Ravana, the king of Lanka to rescue his wife Sita, whom the latter had abducted. The author of the Mahavibhasha<sup>2</sup> refers to an ancient version of Ramayana, consisting of 12,000 verses, while the size of the original Ramayana with the additions made by Suta and Sauti come to 11547 ( ROG, pp. 205-206 ), which together with 443 long metre stanzas come to 11990 verses ( ROG, p. viii ).

The statistical study of the Ramayana has further shown that the four redactors of the Mahabharata who followed

1. Epic studies VIII, Sukthankar Memorial Edition, Poona, 1944, p. 390

2. Guruge, *The Society of Ramayana*, Mahargaon, Ceylon, 1960, p. 45.

Vaishampayana have also made additions to the Ramayana. The great epic scholars such as Hopkins and Ruben have noted the similarities in regard to matter and language between the two epics. Hopkins, for instance, has pointed out their parallel features in regard to proverbs, tales, genealogy and also style i.e. phraseology and metre etc.<sup>1</sup> Ruben<sup>2</sup> has given the parallel phrases in the two epics in the Appendix V in his text. In the critical notes too appended to the Critical Edition of the Ramayana the editors have pointed out a number of parallelism with the Mahabharata as regards matter and manner of expression. The living conditions described by both Suta and Sauti in the two epics seem to be more or less similar. The Buddhist influence, descriptions of town life and philosophical passages in both the epics belongs to the period of Suta and Sauti. Both Harivainsakara and the author of the Parvasangraha have made additions to the Ramayana also. There was still another redactor of Ramayana who has made considerable additions to the epic. He has also added the second part of Uttarakanda ( 41-100 ), which includes the shambukavadha and Sitatyaga. The incorporation of the Uttarakanda in the Ramayana seems to have taken place before 100 A.D. since the famous Buddhist scholar Ashvaghoswa refers to Valmiki in his Sunderakanda as the tutor of Rama's sons, which is mentioned in the above Kanda. Svayambhu, the author of the Paumachariya, who is supposed to have composed his epic 530 years at the nirvana of Mahavira, i.e. about the middle of the first century A.D.<sup>3</sup> also refers to it. The statistical study of the Ramayana now sets at rest the controversy whether it was composed earlier or later than the Mahabharata and establishes clearly that Valmiki composed his original Ramayana earlier than the Bharat of Vaishampayana.

1. Hopkins, GIL, pp. 23-39, 138-151.

2. Studien Fur Texigeschichte des Ramayana, Stuttgart, 1936.

3. Ibid, p. 40.

## Adhyaya - 3

**BHARATA**

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The Mbh. itself mentions that Vyasa had composed the Bharata and that it contained twenty-four thousand shlokas. (PM. I. 1.61). The European scholars call this text the ur. Mahabharata. According to the statistical study, this text starts with adhyaya 55 of the Adiparva and contains only three adhyayas 55-57 of that parva. Vaishampayana begins adhyaya 55 with a benedictory verse paying homage to his teacher Vyasa and tributes to other men of learning. He then announces his intention to relate the story composed by Vyasa of unbounded world renoun. There is enough evidence that the story of Vaishampayana began here. After hearing the Bhargava legends and the story of Janamejaya's sarpasatra, Shaunaka at last expresses his desire to hear the epic of Vyasa. He said to Sauti, " You have told me, oh Sauti, the illustrious story of the Bhrigus starting with their origin and by that I am well pleased with you; pray tell me now the story composed by Vyasa." (T.53.28).

Vaishampayana then briefly recounts the birth of Vyasa and describes the principal characters who figured in the Bharata war. He then briefly mentions all the events that befell

the Pandavas before their return from exile. Even the important events of the dice game, Pandava's defeat therein and their subsequent exile only find a brief mention in these adhyayas. These events briefly alluded to before, however, have been described vividly later by Suta in the succeeding adhyayas of the Adi, the Sabha, Aranyaka and Virata parvas.

There was a king by name Uparichara, also known as Vasu, who was devoted to virtue, but who was also fond of hunting. This king of Paurava race conquered the kingdom of Chedi under instruction of god Indra. After becoming the king of Chedi, he performed great sacrifices and observed the festival of Indra. He was much respected by Indra, who gifted to him an airship and since he coursed through the sky in it, he came to be called Uparichara. When his wife Girica finished her monthly period and was ready for him, he was asked by his forefathers to bring deer meat for offering it on the shraddha day. When he had gone hunting for this purpose, he was still thinking of his wife. Being further excited by the seductive breeze, he shed his seed and asked a hawk to take it to his wife. On the way a hawk flew at him thinking that it was carrying a piece of meat in its mouth; while they were fighting with each other, the seed fell into the water of the river Yamuna and was swallowed by a female fish. This female fish was in reality a celestial nymph, who was transformed into the form of a fish by the curse of a brahmin. After a period of ten months, this fish was caught by a fisherman, and when he opened the stomach of the fish, there came out a male and a female child. After the birth of the twins, the nymph was released from the curse. The fisherman took those two children to the king Uparichara and narrated to him the story of their birth. The king adopted the male child and handed over the female child to the fisherman, who adopted her and named her Satyavati. When this child grew up as a maiden, she was endowed with great beauty and had a pleasant and smiling face. She, however, smelt of fish, as

she passed her time among the fishermen. She tried to help her father by plying a boat on the waters of the Yamuna.

One day when Satyavati was plying her boat, she was seen by the great sage Parashara, who happened to come there in the course of his wanderings. The sage instantly conceived a passion for her and expressed a wish to mate with the bashful maiden. She demured on the ground that they would be seen by others. He then created a fog so that they could not be seen by others when he mated with her. Then he granted her two boons, by one, she could preserve her virginity even after their union and by the other her body would have a sweet fragrance instead of the smell of the fish. Satyavati then coyly submitted herself to the embrace of the sage and conceived and gave birth on that very day to a male child endowed with great lustre. Thus Vyasa was born of Satyavati and Parashara. The child, after taking permission of his mother, set his heart on becoming a hermit. As he was born on an island in the Yamuna, he was called Dvaipayana (island-born). He studied the Vedas and so came to be known as Veda-Vyasa. He taught Sumanta, Paila, his own son Shuka and Vaishampayana the four vedas and got the story of Bharata compiled through Vaishampayana.

Then Bhishma of great prowess and fame was born in the womb of Ganga through king Shantanu. And Karna was born of Kunti in her maidenhood through the Sun-god. When he came out of his mother's womb, he had a natural coat of mail and resplendent ear-rings: And the seed of the great sage Bharadvaja fell into a pot and began to grow. From that seed was born Drona, the preceptor of the Pandavas and the Kauravas. And from the seed of Gautama, fallen upon a clump of reeds was born a twin, Krupi, the mother of Ashvathama and Krupa of great strength. Then was born of the sacrificial fire of Drupada, the king of Panchalas, the mighty hero Dhrishtadyumna, with a bow in hand. And from the sacrificial altar was born Krishnaa (Draupadi) of bright feature and winsome beauty. Then were born the princes of Gandhara, Nagnajit and

Subala, disciples of Prahlada. And from Subala was born Shakuni, who became an enemy of virtue and daughter Gandhari, the mother of the Kauravas.

And from Krishna-dvaipayana were born in the wives of Vichitravirya Dhritarashtra, the lord of men and Pandu of great strength. And from Dvaipayana was also born of a slave woman the wise and sinless Vidura. And unto Pandu by his two wives were born five sons like the celestials. The eldest of them was Yudhishtira, born of the seed of Dharma, the god of justice, and Bhima of enormous appetite was born of Marut, the wind-god. Dhananjaya (Arjuna), foremost among the archers, was born of Indra, the lord of heavens and Nakula and Sahadeva of handsome features were born of the two Ashvins. And unto the wise Dhritarashtra were born of Gandhari a hundred sons including Duryodhana and Dushyasana and Yuyutsu was born of a Vaishya woman. And unto the five Pandavas were born five sons by their common wife Draupadi; from Yudhishtira Prativindhya; from Bhima Sutasoma; from Arjuna Shrutasena. And Bhima begot a son Ghatotkacha by Hidimba in the forest. And from Draupada was born a daughter Shikhandes, who later changed her sex and become Shikhandi, a great warrior. Although many monarchs took part in the great war the prominent ones have been mentioned above (I.51, Sauti).

As Dhritarashtra was born blind from birth, his younger brother Pandu became the king of Hastinapura. After sometime Pandu left his royal duties for some reason and retired to the forest with his two wives Kunti and Madri, Kunti gave birth to three sons Yudhishtira, Bhima, and Arjuna, while Madri bore him two sons Nakula and Sahadeva. Vaishampayana concludes by saying that although many warriors took part in the Bharata war, the more prominent among them have been mentioned above (I.57).

On the death of their father Pandu, the Pandavas came to their ancestral home. Within a short time they became well-

versed in the science of archery. And the Kauravas beheld that their cousins were gifted with strength, prowess and intelligence and were also popular with the public and so became very jealous. Then Duryodhana, taking counsel of Shakuni, his maternal uncle, persecuted Pandavas in various ways for the acquisition of undisputed sovereignty. He gave poison to Bhima, but the wolf-bellied Bhima digested the poison with the food. On another occasion Duryodhana tied the sleeping Bhima on the bank of the Ganga and casting him into the waters went away. But when Bhima woke up, he tore the strings with which he had been tied and came up with all his pains gone. In all these vicissitudes Vidura stood by the Pandavas and came to their help from time to time.

When Duryodhana found that all his attempts to destroy the Pandavas were fruitless, he took counsel with Karna, Duhsyasana and others and caused a house of lac to be constructed. He persuaded Dhritarashtra to send the Pandavas to Varanavata and live in the house of lac. When they were leaving the city of Hastinapura, Vidura warned them of the impending danger and gave them advice as to how they could get over it. The Pandavas lived in Varnavata for the period of one year and took all precautions to protect themselves from the machinations of Virocana, who was appointed by Duryodhana to carry out his foul design. They caused a tunnel to be constructed according to the directions of Vidura and when this became ready, they set fire to the house of lac in which Virocana was burnt. They fled with their mother, fearing of harm from the Kauravas. While they were walking through the woods, they came across demon, Hidimba, whom Bhima killed. But being alarmed at the risk of being exposed by this act, the Pandavas fled in the dark. It was here that Bhima secured Hidimbaa, sister of Hidimba, for his wife and Ghatotkaca was born of her as a result of this union. Thereafter they reached the town of Ekacakra and dwelt there in the house of a brahmin, in the guise of brahmacharis. Here they heard loud lamentations from the inmates of the house and came to

know that it was the turn of the family to provide one of its members to a fierce man-eating demon Bakasura for his meal. The mighty Bhima agreed to go there; slew him with the strength of his arms and freed the citizens from his clutches.

Here the Pandavas came to know that Krishna, the princess of Panchala, was holding a svayamvara to choose a husband. And hearing of it they went there and Arjuna having won the wager, they obtained the maiden as their common wife and dwelt there for a year. After they were known, they went back to Hastinapura. There king Dhritarashtra and Bhishma told them as follows : " In order, O dear ones, that there should be no dissension between you and your cousins, we have settled that you should make your home in Khandavaprastha. Therefore, repair ye to that place, casting off all jealousy and settle there. " Accordingly, the Pandavas went there with their friends and followers and in course of time, brought many a prince under their subjection. And adhering to truth and virtue, they gradually rose to power. And Bhima subjugated the east. Arjina the north, Nakula the west and Sahadeva the south. Thus they brought the known world under their domination.

Then for some reason Yudhisthira sent his brother Arjuna into the woods. During his stay in the forest, Arjuna went to his cousin Krishna in Dvaravati. There he abducted and then married the younger sister of Vaasudeva, by name Subhadra of lotus eyes and sweet speech. Then Arjuna assisted by Krishna burnt the Khandava forest to gratify Agni. And Agni gave to Arjuna the excellent bow Gandiva, an inexhaustible quiver and a chariot bearing the figure of the eagle-god on its standard. It was on this occasion that Arjuna rescued the great asura Maya from the fire, who in gratitude built for the Pandavas a celestial palace. Duryodhana, on beholding that palace, became jealous and desired to possess it. And so deceiving Yudhisthira in a dice game with the help of his maternal uncle Shakuni, he contrived to send the Pandavas to the forest to spend a period of twelve years in exile and one more year in disguise.

On the expiry of the period in exile, the Pandavas came out of their hiding and camped at Upaplaya in Virata's kingdom.<sup>1</sup> When Dhritarashtra came to know about this, he asked his charioteer Sanjaya to visit the Pandavas. He asked him to convey his affectionate regards and use his offices for the peaceful settlement of the dispute. Sanjaya then went to Upaplaya and conveyed to Yudhisthira the affectionate regards sent by Dhritarashtra and his desire for friendship and peace. Hearing this Yudhisthira felt relieved and said if only they got their kingdom back, they would gladly forget their past sufferings. Sanjaya then said that the perverse sons of Dhritarashtra would not listen to the advice of their elders and that he should try to avoid the evils of war even if it meant that he would not regain his kingdom. After consulting Krishna, Yudhisthira told Sanjaya to convey the following message to king Dhritarashtra : " You were generous enough to grant us a share of the kingdom when we were young. You should not deny that share to us now and drive us to live on charity. Dear uncle, there is enough room for us and the Kauravas in this world. " He also asked him to tell Duryodhana to grant them at least what was lawfully theirs. In the interest of peace, he would be content if they got five villages, one for each brother. He, however, made it clear that he was equally prepared for peace as well as war ( V. 22-31 ). Sanjaya reported his parleys with the Pandavas' to Dhritarashtra and pleaded for peace by giving up Pandavas' share to them. The elders such as Bhishma offered the same advice but to no avail.

After Sanjaya left for Hastinapura, Yudhisthira said to Krishna that from Sanjaya's talk he could gather that Dhritarashtra, blinded by the affection for his sons, desired peace without the cession of any territory to them. He, therefore, sought the advice of Krishna as to how they could secure their kingdom without losing religious merit. Krishna, in

1. The Vaishampayana text does not contain any adhyayas in the Sabha, Aranyaka and Virataparvas and continues the Bharata story after the return of the Pandavas from their exile.

reply, volunteered to go to the Dhritarashtra's court and make a final effort to secure their interests without war. Yudhisthira told him not to undertake the risk, as the wicked Kauravas would stop at nothing. Krishna, however, felt that they should explore all avenues for a peaceful solution of the dispute, so that they should not be blamed later for not doing everything possible to prevent the war. So Krishna went to Hastinapura ( V. 70 ) and returned to report the failure of his mission ( V.145-149 ). He, therefore, told the Pandavas that there was no choice but to make preparations for the war.

It may be worthwhile to review the military strength of the Kauravas and Pandavas at this time. When the Pandavas came to Hastinapura for the first time, the Kauravas were already ruling there and were militarily in a strong position. Further they had formed marital alliances with the kings of Gandhara and Sindhu-Sauvira, as their mother was a Gandhara princess and their sister was married to Jayadratha, the king of Sindhu-Sauviras. They had, therefore, two powerful allies in their maternal uncle, Shakuni, and their brother-in-law, Jayadratha, and so could count upon their help in the time of war. On the other hand, the Pandavas were friendless and they had to depend upon the good-will and support of Bhishma, Drona and Vidura, who were fortunately well disposed towards them. This became obvious when the Kauravas conspired to get rid of them by burning them in a house of lac at Varanavat. For though they made their escape through a secret tunnel which they had constructed on the advice of Vidura, they had to flee in fear of the Kauravas ( 1.55 ). Their position improved after they got married to the Panchala princess Draupadi and formed a marriage alliance with Drupada, the powerful king of the Panchalas. Even Dhritarashtra then found it prudent to give them the forest territory of Khandavaprastha, so that his sons could live in peace. The Pandavas improved their military position further, when Arjuna married Subhadra, sister of his cousin and friend Krishna and his son Abhimanyu married the Matsya princess Uttara during the period of their exile.

Thus when the war became inevitable, the two sides were more or less equally matched in military strength. On hearing the report of Krishna, Yudhisthira told his brothers that there was no longer any hope for peace and issued orders for marshalling his forces. His army consisted of seven akshauhinis, each of which was placed under the command of Drupada, Virata, Dhristadyumna, Shikhandi, Satyaki, Chekitana and Bhima. After consulting his brothers and Krishna, Yudhisthira appointed Dhristadyumna as the generalissimo of his army. Then the Pandavas marched to Kurukshetra amidst the war cries of their warriors, the blowing of the conches and the trumpets of the elephants.

On the side of the Kauravas, Duryodhana requested his grand-sire to become the generalissimo of the Kaurava army. Bhishma told Duryodhana that he was as fond of the Pandavas as of the Kauravas and so he accepted the commission on the condition that he would try to defeat the Pandavas short of killing them. He also said that he would like Karna not to fight under him, as he was always opposed to him. Karna too on his part chose to keep out of the war, so long as Bhishma was in command of the army. On the appointment of Bhishma as the supreme commander, the Kaurava army too marched to Kurukshetra, ready to give battle.

Although the war arose out of a family feud between cousins as to who should rule over Hastinapur, it did not remain confined to the Kuru tribe or the tribes closely related to them. For the determination of the tribes which actually took part in the war, we shall have to confine our attention only to those portions of the war books, which belong to the Vaishampayana text. This is essential because much of the information contained in the Mbh. about the geography of the country and of interregional contacts among the tribes pertains to the Adi ( excepting the three adhyayas 55-57 ), Sabha, Aranyaka and Ashvamedhika parvas which have been added by later

redactors.<sup>1</sup> Even when we confine our attention to the Vaishampayana text, we find that a large number of tribes are stated to have taken part in the war, including Yavanas and Shakas. It is, therefore, necessary to devise some objective method by which we can identify the tribes which actually fought in the war. For this purpose it was considered that only those tribes should be considered as having fought in the war if their kings or warriors lost their life in the war. To this we must add a corollary that two neighbouring tribes might have elected to fight under one leader as in the following instances. The Chedis and Karushas fought under the Chedi King Dhruktaketu; the Sindhus and Sauvriras fought under the command of king Jayadratha and the Vrishnis and Andhakas fought under the famous warrior Satyaki.

The war was a regularly conducted war by professional warriors trained for that purpose. The science of archery ( dhanurveda ) was well-developed and formed part of the curriculum in the training of warriors and military instructors of the calibre of Drona and Kripa were employed to train them. We read in the Vaishampayana text that the sons of Pandu soon became proficient in the science of warfare after they came to Hastinapur to claim their patrimony.<sup>2</sup> The warriors received training not only in archery but also in every kind of weapon. From the descriptions of the important battles in the epic, it is clear that the iron bow and arrows had come into prominent use at that time. Although the standard of archery was high in the time of Vaishampayana, it had come into use in recent times. The Parvatiyas or hill tribes still fought by flinging rocks and were said to be more proficient in that art than the plainsmen.<sup>3</sup> The mace too fashioned out of stone was in current use.<sup>4</sup> As we saw before, in the time Valmiki, copper and bell metal were

1. In what follows, I acknowledge my debt to the scholarly work of B. C. Law, Tribes in Ancient India.

2. VM. I. 55.6.

3. Ashinayuddhesu Kustalah, VM. 0 7.97.30.

4. Ashmagarba gada, VM - 6.80.26.

known and used for making weapons. With the discovery of iron, iron balls,<sup>1</sup> and rocks studded with iron pikes<sup>2</sup> were also pressed into service. The warriors used to wear a coat of mail ( varma ) or a breast plat ( kavaca ) made of leather and a leather-guard on the left arm ( tanutra ).

Thus the war was not clearly a hit-and-run affair, but a regularly conducted war by professional soldiers trained for that purpose. The soldiers were recruited on merit, regularly trained and paid monthly salaries. This is what Dhritarastra says about the recruitment and training of the Kaurava army ( VI.72 ) : " Our army, consisting of diverse forces, is possessed of many excellencies and is efficient. It is arrayed according to the rules of military science, and so should be irresistible. It is loyal and its valour has been tested before. The soldiers are neither too old nor too young, neither lean nor corpulent. They are free from disease and are of active habits and possess well-developed and strong frames. They are provided with coats of mail and are well-equipped with arms. They are trained in every kind of weapon and are skilled in encounters with swords, with bare arms and with maces. They are well exercised in lances, sabres and darts, as also in iron clubs, short arrows, javellins and mallets. They are trained in all kinds of army exercises and are skilled in mounting the elephant-back; in striking with effect, in marching and retreating. Many a time, they have been tested in the management of elephants, horses and chariots. They are employed on regular pay, not on the basis of their lineage, nor from favouritism nor because of family connections or friendship. They are all accomplished and well-bred, and their families are kept contented and befriended in many ways. They are all noble and full of spirit and well cared for by their officers. They are under the protection of warriors who are respected by all and who have

1. Ayogudah, VII. 153.23.  
2. Shataghnis, VIII. 7-8.

joined us of their own accord with their troops and retinue. " These considerations are still relevant not only for the recruitment and training of the armed forces but also of the public servants.

With the discovery of iron, the bow and arrow had become a major factor in the art of war. The bow was commonly known as dhanus, chapa, ishvasa and sharasana and ( from the material used ) sharanga and karmuka. The sharanga bow ( made of horn ) is said to have been used by Lord Vishnu and was the best. Ordinarily it was made of wood of beatle-nut tree ( karmuka ) from which it derived its name kaarmuka. The arrow was also known by different names such as ishu, shara, bana, sayaka, vishikha, naracha etc. The shafts of the arrow were made of wood or bomboo, and the arrow heads were made of iron or some other metal. The bow is said to be as long as the palmyra tree and we are told that the normal length of the arrow was that of an axle of a chariot. We get many descriptions of the arrows in the epic. They are described as long and heavy, sharp and strong and made to suit different purposes. The crescent-shaped arrow ( ardhachandra ) was very sharp and could cut off the head from the body or break up a bow in twain. The arrows shaped like a calf's tooth ( vatsadanta ) could pierce through the armour. The awl-shaped arrow ( aaramukha ) was used for cutting sturdy objects and the knife-shaped arrow ( kshurapra ) for breaking the bow and the arrow. It would have been pointless to devise such special types of arrows, had the warriors not been good marksmen as supposed by Hopkins. The arrow was perhaps the first missile which could be flung at the enemy by means of the bow with great force from a long distance. The other weapons could be hurled at a short distance or thrust into the body of the enemy in a personal combat.

Although the arrow was the deadliest weapon then in use, the warrior using it suffered from one great disadvantage. In order to strike it with force, he had to hold the bow perpendicularly as high as possible and then pull the arrow

back to the ear. Since both his hands were well-occupied in holding the bow and the arrow, he could not have fought from a horse-back. He had, therefore, to operate from a war-car (ratha), which could also keep a stock of his bows, arrows and other weapons and give him the necessary mobility on the battlefield. Although war-cars possessing four or eight wheels are sometimes mentioned, the war-car was usually a light two-wheeler drawn by two or four horses. The war-car was light and small and so could be easily overturned, if the charioteer lost his grip. The performance of a warrior thus depended in no small measure upon the skill of the charioteer. The victories of Arjuna depended as much on the superior skill of Krishna. In order to offset this advantage which Arjuna had over Karna, Duryodhana had to persuade Shalya to become Karna's charioteer, which the latter accepted on certain conditions.

The epic frequently refers to the battle-axe (parashu) which was the favourite weapon of Bhargava Rama. The other weapons used in the Bharata war were the mace, the spear and the sword. Next in importance to arrow was the mace type of weapon, variously named gadaa, musala, mudgar, tomara or bhindipala. The mace was the favourite weapon of Bhima and Duryodhana. The weapon next in importance was the sword, which was variously described as khadga, nistrinsha, ari, rishti and pattisha. There is no clear mention of the metal used in forging the sword, but this weapon was also used most often. The categories of other weapons mentioned in the epic are prasa, shakti or lance (bhaalaa in marathi), parigha, an iron club, danda, a staff etc. We do not get much information as to how these weapons were fashioned or put to different uses. We, however, get elaborate descriptions of their decorations which shows that the author was more a poet than a military expert. We cannot presume that these weapons exactly answered the descriptions given by later redactors or later works such as Nitiprakashika. However, it appears that in the case of weapons

possessing shafts or handles such as the arrow or the spear, their shafts or handles were made of wood and their tips were made of iron.

The major portions of the Bhishma and Drona parvas, the whole of Karnaparva and the major portion of Shalyaparva give a full, but a greatly exaggerated account of the war events from day to day. We also meet with frequent accounts of pitched battles, variously described as fierce (tumula), jumbled (sankula), tumultuous (nirmaryada). Such a battle usually started in perfect order between car-warriors, horsemen, elephant-riders and foot-soldiers, fighting with their kind.<sup>1</sup> But this was soon followed by bedlam as illustrated in the following citation<sup>2</sup> from among many which abound in the epic. They soon began to fight as if they were possessed by the demons. Hundreds and thousands of foot-soldiers fought in utter disregard of all consideration due to others. 'And in that awesome combat destructive of heroes the sire slew the son, the son slew his sire, the uncle his sister's son, the sister's son his uncle, a friend his friend, the kith their kin.' Such accounts may be dismissed as instances of hyperbolic language (atishayokti), which is used by poets. How far this is a true account of the fighting or contains an exaggerated account in which the poet has given free reign to his poetic fancy is only a matter of conjecture.

We also get frequent descriptions of single combats or duels in which free use is made of the miraculous; for instance, though the gods did not take active part in the war, they watched the battles from the sky and gave praise where it was due. We come across many descriptions of feats performed by the archers such as the use of missiles (astras), which could produce rain, fire, stupor etc. and the magical devices employed

1. VM. IV. 53. 10-13.

2. VM. VI. 46.

by the demon warriors such a Ghatotkaca and Alayudha in their combats<sup>1</sup> and these could be dismissed as the products of the poet's fancy. Further we often come across descriptions of fierce duels in which the combatants are said to have discharged showers of arrows, with which the sky became clouded.<sup>2</sup> The logistical problems involved in supplying and carrying such a large number of arrows even to the principal warriors would have been formidable. That the supply of the arrows was limited is clear from the fact that they were stacked in the chariot of the warrior.<sup>3</sup> Thus the accounts of the duels in which the combatants are said to have sent showers of arrows are due to poetic exaggeration and any conclusions based thereon such as that 'their aim was apparently less good than their quickness in shooting' or 'that their shooting was ineffectual'<sup>4</sup> seem to be off the mark.

However, the fate of the war depended on single combats which took place between heroes, who fought as equals on equal terms. A car-warrior could fight a duel with only a car-warrior and not with one on horseback or one on foot. In a duel the customary rule was that both the combatants fought with the same kind of weapons or when either of them was deprived of his weapon, they fought with bare arms (*baahuyuddha*) or with fists (*mushtiyudha*). Such duels were fought in the course of the battle or as a result of a challenge given by a warrior. Intervention by a third party in the duel also met with strong disapproval. When in the course of the war, Bhurishravas took out his sword to kill Satyaki, Krishna advised Arjuna to cut off his hand. When Arjuna did it, Bhurishravas castigated him how he born in the royal Kuru family, acted on the advice of a warrior of an uncivilized Vrishni tribe.

1. VM. VII . 152-153.

2. VM. VII . 114.35.

3. This is clear from the fact that the normal length of the arrow was restricted to the length of the axle of the chariot.

4. Hopkins, RCAI, p. 156.

Because of this rule a car-warrior had to keep ready to meet any contingency in war and so had to acquire skills in the use of all kinds of weapons i. e. become a *chitrayodhi*. Sometimes when he was deprived of his car due to enemy action, he had to fight on foot. Then he usually chose to fight with a mace or failing that with a sword. The mace fight was a highly developed art in the epic times, and especially proficient in this art were Shalya, Balarama, Bhima and Duryodhana. In their final encounter Duryodhana chose to fight with Bhima with a mace, and we have in the *Shalyaparva* a vivid description of how both of them fought with a brilliant display of tricks, circles or passes ( IX-56 ). But when Dhristadyumna's bow and mace failed, he used his sword and shield decorated with hundred moons.<sup>1</sup> The skill with which the sword is used is described in the *Bhishmaparva* ( 13-68 ). The sword could not have been of great weight or size, as it is forever breaking in the user's hand. Hopkins states that the sword manouevres are not described in detail, but only mentioned by name and later described by commentators.<sup>2</sup> We do not get many accounts of duels fought with the sword, as we get of the duels fought with the bow and the arrow or with the mace. Nor are any warriors said to excel in sword-fight, as Arjuna and Karna are said to excel in archery or Bhima and Duryodhana in mace-fight; for these reasons, the sword seems to have come into use much later in the epic period.

If we, therefore, make allowance for the miraculous and the marvellous, which are the hall-mark of epic poetry, the descriptions of the battles and the weapons with which they were fought do not seem unrealistic. In fact, the fourfold army (*caturanga bala*) and the weapons used continued in vogue at the time of Alexander's conquests. Plutarch tells us that the Macedonians, whose spirits had been depressed by their encounter with Porus, refused to advance further, when they

1. VM. VII. 164.35.

2. Hopkins, RCAI, p. 230.

received news that the last Nanda king was waiting for them with an army of 8000 war cars, 6000 fighting elephants, 80,000 horses and 2,00,000 foot warriors.<sup>1</sup> The Greek report at an early date the use of the cane bows by the Hindus as well as of the iron-tipped arrows.<sup>2</sup> As pointed out by G. N. Pant<sup>3</sup> the arrows have a continuous history in India and even the so-called primitive weapons, namely the clubs and rocks, were in use in later periods. The bow and the arrow remained in vogue till 1857, when arrows were showered by the Indian rebels on the company's soldiers. It was with a club that Mahamud Gazni shattered the Shiva linga in the Somanath temple in 1025 A. D. The clubs used by the Mughal, Maratha and Sikh warriors are preserved in many Indian museums. In the Sabha and Shanti parvas we read that propellers known as Shataghnis were used for hurling stones from the walls of fortresses against besieging armies. As late as 1670 A. D. pebbles (haathadhonda) were used in the battle of Udayagiri by the Maratha soldiers of the great Shivaji.

The battle raged over a period of eighteen days, ending in the death of Duryodhana at the hands of Bhima and the final rout of the Kaurava army. The major portions of the Bhishma and Drona parvas, the whole of Karnaparva and the major portions of Shalya and Sauptika parvas give a full, but a greatly exaggerated account of the war events from day to day. There was fierce fighting on all days, alternating between single combats and pitched battles, and the fortunes of war seemed to smile on the Kauravas on one occasion and on the Pandavas at another. The reporting of the war by Sanjaya is repetitive and tedious, only occasionally enlivened by the heroic feats of some warrior and the poetic descriptions, so that we can hardly expect to get any information about the strategies or tactics employed by the commanders of both the armies. Even the battle array formed by the commanders of both armies at the

1. Invasion of Alexander, p. 274.

2. Hd VII. 65.

3. MMR. pp. 223-226.

time of starting the battle on any day is mentioned by a mere name, leaving us completely in the dark about the reason as to why a particular battle array was chosen on that particular day in preference to others.

The strategems employed by the Pandavas on the advice of Krishna have become the subject of accusations by Kauravas and counter-accusations by the Pandavas and Krishna. On the tenth day of the battle, Arjuna kept Sikhandi in front of Bhishma and attacked him. When Shikhandi's darts pierced his breast, the old warriors' anger rose like flaming fire, but he controlled himself and decided not to be provoked into fighting Shikhandi, who was born a woman and later changed his sex. Arjuna hurled arrows from behind Shikhandi at the weak points of Bhishma's armour. As the combat proceeded. Arjuna's arrows cut the shield of Bhishma to pieces and covered his body and Bhishma fell headlong on the ground from the chariot.

As he fell the gods who were looking down from above, folded their hands in reverent salutation to him. Bhishma's body did not touch the ground as the arrows stuck all over his body, and when he complained about it, the Kaurava princes who stood near him brought him cushions. The old warrior rejected them and smilingly turning towards Arjuna asked him to give a cushion befitting a warrior. When Arjuna heard these words of the grandsire, he took three arrows from out of his quiver and so placed them that the grandsire's head found support on their points. Expressing satisfaction at the pillow, the grandsire said that he would lie there on the battle-field awaiting death, until the sun turned north of the equator (Uttarayana). Thus fell Bhishma, the son of Ganga, who renounced the crown and his family-life to give joy to his father; the self-less hero; who always gave support to righteousness, thus repaid his debt to the Kaurava king and lay wounded there to sacrifice his life on the altar of the battle-field.

Thereafter Duryodhana gave the command of his forces to Drona. Then he sat with Karna and Dushyasana in a council and hatched a plan. They thought that if Yudhisthira could be captured alive, Pandavas would agree to any terms to end the war. However, all attempts to capture Yudhisthira alive failed and when Duryodhana blamed Drona about it, the latter told him that he would not be able to seize Yusdhisthira so long Arjuna was nearby. Then they incited the Samshaptakas who had taken the oath to kill Arjuna to create trouble so as to draw him away from the battle-field. Arjuna took the consent of Yudhisthira and left to handle the problem of the Samshaptakas. Drona then rearranged his army in a lotus formation and attacked Yudhisthira fiercely. Only young Abhimanyu, son of Arjuna, knew how to penetrate this formation and Yudhisthira told him to break it and open a passage for their warriors. When Abhimanyu caused havoc in the Kaurava army and penetrated the formation, Jayadratha, the Sindhu king prevented the Pandava warriors from following him. Six great Kaurava warriors, Drona, Krupa, Karna, Ashvatthama, Brihadbala and Kritavarman closed in upon him, when the son of Duhshasana stuck him with his mace and killed him. This was greeted with jubilation and cries of victory all over the Kaurava army. Yuyutsu, son of Dhritarashtra did not approve of this cowardly act and throwing his weapon in disgust left the battle-field.

When Arjuna and Krishna were proceeding towards their camp after defeating and slaying the Samshaptakas, they saw that there was silence and gloom in the Pandava army. When Arjuna saw that Abhimanyu was not running out to meet him as usual, Yudhisthira announced to him the death of Abhimanyu. He explained to him the circumstances in which he had to commission Abhimanyu to break the lotus formation of the Kaurava army. He then went on describing the valour of his son in defeating many of the redoubtable warriors of the Kaurava side. He then told him how six of the Kaurava warriors led by Drona and Krupa surrounded him and succeeded in smashing

his chariot, after which Duhshasana's son killed him. When Arjuna asked why the Pandava forces could not save his life, Yudhisthira informed him that Jayadratha, the Sindhu king, had held back the Pandava forces accompanying him. Arjuna then became furious and vowed to kill Jayadratha the next day before sunset. Arjuna broke through the Kaurava opposition the next day and reached Jayadratha. Inflamed by the thought of slaughter of Abhimanyu and all the great wrongs inflicted by the Kauravas, Arjuna fought with fury and killed him.

On the fifteenth day of the war, Krishna said to Arjuna that it was not possible to defeat Drona, without adopting a subterfuge, which was not strictly according to the rules of war. It was only if someone whom Drona trusted told him that his son Ashvatthama had died, he would throw down his weapons. Yudhisthira stood a while, reflecting upon it deeply and agreed to bear the burden of the sin. Bhima then lifted his iron mace and brought it down on the head of a huge elephant called Ashvatthama and it fell down dead. After killing it, he went near the division commanded by Drona and roared that Ashvatthama had been killed, so that all could hear it. When Drona heard this, he asked Yudhisthira whether it was true. The acharya thought that the Dharmaputra would not utter a lie even to gain the kingship of the three worlds. Yudhisthira was petrified at the thought of what he was about to do, but said aloud : "Yes, it is true that Ashvatthama has been slain", but added in a low and tremulous voice, ' I am not certain, whether it is a man or elephant.' (*naro va kunjaro va*). When Drona heard that his beloved son had been killed, his will to live vanished. At this moment Dhristadyumna climbed the chariot with a sword in hand and fulfilled his destiny as the slayer of Drona by snapping off his head amidst cries of sorrow and horror from all around.

After Drona died, Duryodhana installed Karna as the generalissimo of his army. Karna stood up again in his gorgeous war chariot driven by Shalya. His great renown as a warrior and

his dauntless courage heartened the Kauravas. Arjuna led the attack on Karna, supported by Bhima behind his chariot. Duhshasana made a concentrated attack on Bhima and sent a shower of arrows at him. When Bhima thought of the wrongs which both Duryodhana and Duhshasana had perpetrated on them, his blood began to boil within his heart and anger blazed up within him uncontrollably. Throwing down all his weapons, he jumped from his chariot and leapt upon Duhshasana like a tiger on its prey, hurled him down and broke his limbs. After killing him, he sucked the blood from his enemy's body and danced on the battle-field like a beast of prey. The scene made everyone shudder and even Karna was shaken as he saw Bhima in his wrath. Shalya said to Karna that it did not befit him to show any sign that may be mistaken for fear. He reminded him that when Duryodhana stood quivering in despair, he should not lose heart but must bear the full burden of the war and fight with determination with Arjuna, and win eternal glory on the earth or the warrior's heaven.

Then followed a violent battle. Karna sent a deadly arrow which spat fire against Arjuna, but at the nick of time Krishna, Arjuna's chrioteer, pressed the vehicle five fingers deep in the mud so that the shaft missed Partha's head but struck off his helmet. Arjuna was livid with shame and fixed a dart on his bow to make an end of Karna. At this fated hour, the left wheel of Karna's chariot sank in the mire. Karna jumped down on the ground to lift the wheel out of the mire and appealed to Arjuna's sense of honour and fairplay to wait until he set the car right. Then Krishna intervened and exclaimed, "Hey Karna, now that you find yourself in a difficult situation, you too remember that there are things like fairplay and chivalry. Where was this fairplay when you acquiesced in the plot of Duryodhana to burn the Pandavas while sleeping in a house of wax which he had built for them. Where was your sense of fairplay, when you and the Kauravas surrounded young Abhimanyu and mercilessly massacred him ? He then told Arjuna not to waste any more time and slay him. Arjuna accepted his advice and sent an arrow, which cut and severed the head of Karna.

After the death of Karna, Duryodhana gave the supreme command to Shalya, who now supervised the formations of the army. From the side of Pandavas, Yudhisthira led the attack personally against Shalya. Everyone wondered how a person, who was till then known to be an embodiment of gentleness, could fight so furiously. The battle remained equal for a long time, but when Yudhisthira hurled his spear with such great force at Shalya, it struck him and his body lay down lifeless on the field. When Shalya, the last of the Kaurava generals, fell dead, the surviving sons of Dhritarashtra joined together and made an attack on Bhima who killed them. "Now Duryodhana alone remains," said Bhima and waited for the day when he could score victory over him by killing him. Shakuni led an attack on the division of Sahadeva. After a fierce battle Sahadeva discharged a sharp-edged arrow, which went straight and cut through Shakuni's neck, and the head which had concocted all the wicked deeds of the Kauravas rolled on the battle-field.

When Duryodhana found that he could not rally his defeated army and he was left alone, he took up his mace and walked towards a pool of water to cool his frame, which was burning like fire. Yudhisthira and his brothers arrived there in hot pursuit of their great enemy. Yudhisthira taunted him by saying how he could, after the destruction of his family and tribe, try to escape death by hiding himself in the pond. Touched to the quick Duryodhana replied that he did not come there to save his skin but to cool the fire that was raging within him. He stepped out of the pool and challenged Bhima to fight with him. Both were equal in strength and skilled in mace fight. The battle raged long and the issue seemed doubtful when Krishna indicated that he should crush his thigh. When Bhima saw it, he leaped like a lion and smashed Duryodhana's thigh with his mace and broke it. Duryodhana fell down on the ground and Bhima jumped on the body of his enemy with his foot and danced a terrible dance. Yudhisthira told Bhima not to forget that Duryodhana was a prince and their cousin and that

he should cease his dance. Thus ended the great holocaust of the Bharata war.

Vaishmpayana has not made any direct attempt to defend the subterfuges employed by the Pandavas to kill Bhishma, Drona, Karna and Duryodhana in the battle. Evidently he felt that these actions of the Pandavas came within the definition of apaddharma, as they were committed in the interest of self-preservation. He definitely states that the victory of the Pandavas was the triumph of righteousness, *yato dharmas tato jayah*. We cannot judge the conduct of the Pandavas according to the ethical standards current in our times. But are our standards any better than what they were three thousand years ago ? Our so called civilised nations do not feel any scruples or compunction in bombing civilian population and slaughtering defenceless old men, women and children, when a war starts.

When Ashvatthama, Kripa and Kritavarma heard of Duryodhana's fall, they quickly went to the field of battle and beheld the son of Dhritarashtra lying prostrate on the ground in great agony. Seeing the one-time master of the world reduced to this plight, Ashvatthama swore to dispatch all his enemies to the abode of death by all means within his power. Hearing this resolve of Drona's son, Duryodhana expressed his satisfaction and installed him as the generalissimo of the army (IX.64). Then the three heroes set out and reached at the hour of sunset a dense forest near the Kuru camp. They sat under a gigantic banian tree and bemoaned the destruction that had taken place in both camps. Tired and exhausted, both Kripa and Kritavarma soon succumbed to sleep, but Ashvatthama, burning with rage and hatred, could not get a wink of sleep. Very soon as he was casting his eyes about him, he saw a great banian tree on which thousands of crows were roosting in the night. Then he saw an owl with a fearful body and long talons, suddenly swoop down on the slumbering crows and slay hundreds of them in no time. Beholding this highly suggestive deed perpetrated by the owl in the dead of the night, a plan began to take shape in

Ashvatthama's mind of slaying the Pandavas and Panchalas slumbering in their camp.

Having decided to execute his resolution, Ashvatthama awoke his companions and informed them of his plan. Kripa tried to dissuade him by appealing to his moral sense, saying that it was wrong to kill persons who had laid down their arms after the day's fight and trustfully gone to sleep. Agreeing with his maternal uncle, Ashvatthama said : "Without doubt, O uncle, it is as you say. But the Pandavas themselves have smashed the bridges of morality in smithereens. In the very sight of all kings, my father was slain by Dhristadyumna after he had laid down his arms. Karna also, that foremost of warriors, was struck down by Arjuna after his chariot-wheel had sunken in the ground and he was trying to pull it out. So also Bhishma was slain by Arjuna, when he had laid aside his weapons, seeing Shikhandi placed in the vanguard of the battle. So also the mighty Bhurishrava was killed by Satyaki, while he was sitting in a meditative posture, awaiting death. Duryodhana too was killed treacherously by Bhima in the very sight of all the lords of the earth. Why do you not censure them for breaking all the rules of the war ? I shall not rest in peace until I have slain the Panchalas, come what may." So saying Ashvatthama mounted his chariot and set out in the direction of the Pandava camp, with Kripacarya and Kritavarma following him.

When Ashvatthama arrived at the gate of the Panchala camp, he saw a grim and awesome figure and prayed to Shiva for help. Lord Shiva, propitiated by his prayer, said, "Out of consideration for Krishna who is devoted to me, I have spared the Panchalas so far, but now their days are numbered." Then he gave to Ashvatthama a shining sword and disappeared (X.7). Ashvatthama then asked his companions to wait at the gate so that they could stop those who tried to escape. He thereafter entered the Panchala camp and slew Dhristadyumna and Shikhandi, the sons of Draupadi, and many other Pandava

warriors. Kripacarya and Kritavarma set fire to the Panchala camp and slew all those who took to flight to save their lives.

Then the trio hurried to where Duryodhana was lying to give him the news. Arriving there they found that life had been almost extinct from the king. Then Ashvatthama uttered these words : " If, O king, you have any life left in you, listen to this, I have slain all the men in the Panchala camp, when they were all asleep. I have killed the wicked Dhristadyumna and all other Panchala warriors. On the side of the Pandavas only seven remain, the five Pandavas, Vaasudeva and Satyaki. On our side we three live. " When Duryodhana heard these words, he regained his consciousness and said in reply. " You have achieved what neither the son of Ganga nor Karna nor your sire could achieve. I shall now die in peace. Godspeed to ye. We shall now meet in heaven. " Having said this, he breathed his last. When Sanjaya informed king Dhritarashtra of his son's death, he gave a long sigh and became plunged in grief.

Very high ideals were placed before the king by Valmiki and Vaishampayana. Though Rama was an absolute ruler, Ramarajya had come to be regarded as an ideal state. Valmiki describes the righteous rule of Raama in the Yuddhakanda ( VR. 116. 80-90 ). Under his benevolent rule, widows did not lament nor was there any fear from rogues or from epidemics. The kingdom was free from thieves and robbers and misfortunes did not overtake anyone. All were happy and devoted to their duties and did not harm one another. The people lived along with their progeny in perfect health and free from grief. The rains came in proper time, the winds blew gently and the trees with their spreading branches, bore flowers and fruits. His subjects were content to perform their duties and lived a righteous and fruitful life during his long rule. We do not get any similar description of the rule of Yudhishtira in the epic of Vaishampayana. But the advice of grandsire Bhishma ( XII.140 ) indicates how a king should govern his kingdom. According to Bhishma the king should always wield the rod of

justice and punish offenders against the law. A king should be neither severe nor mild. He should be stern when the occasion requires sternness and mild when the occasion requires mildness. If he is not stern, his subjects will prowl like wolves devouring one another. Contemptible is the ruler in whose kingdom robbers go about plundering people. Whatever sin there is in killing an innocent person who ought not to be killed is equal to that in not killing one that deserves to be killed. Appointing therefore, high-born men of knowledge as his ministers, a king should govern his subjects righteously.

The apaddharma policy ( VM. 13,14 ) as laid down by Vaishampayana is likely to give the impression that the end justifies the means'. To prevent such a misunderstanding, Sauti enumerates in XII.129, the circumstances in which alone this policy is to be adopted. He makes it quite clear that this should be his last resort, when there is no other straightforward method of winning the desired goal. He therefore, advised the king to avoid vices like capidity and anger ( XII.162 ) and practise self-control austerity, truthfulness and compassion.<sup>1</sup> In the section known as Vamadevagita ( 93-95 ), the sage Vamadeva says that while it is generally supposed that the greatness of a king depends upon success in war, he can attain a greater victory without recourse to fighting. This is so because a person who is able to restrain his passion creates no enemies ( 95-9 ). Sauti, therefore, makes it quite clear that resort to apaddharma is permissible only when it is a matter of life and death and even then he lays stress on proper atonement ( prayashcitta ).

1. XII. 154-156, 158.

Adhyaya - 4

**THE MAHABHARATA**

According to the testimony of Dio Chrisostomas, the Mahabharata was known to contain one lakh of verses in the first century A.D. Now the question arises whether the Mbh. per se consisted of one lakh verses or whether Harivamsha should be regarded as part of the Mbh. for this purpose. The commentators of Mbh. regard it as an integral part of the epic. The vulgate editions of the Mbh. and Harivamsha contain about 84,000 and 16,000 verses respectively, adding upto the figure of one lakh verses. Nilakantha observes in his introductory comment of Harivamsha as follows : " Vyasa wrote the Mahabharata with one lakh verses inclusive of the three parvas of Harivamsha as stated in I.2.70. As regards the size of the Mbh., it is stated that it contains one lakh stanzas and this condition is fulfilled only by the inclusion of Harivamsha in it. Vyasa also says at the end of Harivamsha that he has told the Mbh. ending with Bhavishyaparva. He finally concludes that the recital of the Mbh. is not complete without that of Harivamsha, which is treated as an integral part of the epic in the enumeration of the parvas and the stanzas. ( MGG. pp. 232-233 ).

Sauti starts with the story of his visit to the convention of

Shaunaka in the Naimisha forest, where he recited the epic. Here Sauti describes himself as the son of Suta Lomaharshana. ( I.4.1 ) As the adhyayas ( I.4-5 ), which speak of the visit of Sauti to the hermitage of Shaunaka belong to the B-style, it is obvious that Sauti was the author of the B-style. It is further noticed that in the ashvamedhikaparva only eleven adhyayas 51-61 belong to the B-style, while the rest belong to the alpha style. It is, therefore, evident that the alpha style adhyayas came to be added to the epic earlier than the B-style adhyayas and so one can safely assume they were added by Suta.

As regards the birth of the Pandavas Vaishampayana merely states ( I.55-57 ) that Pandu had five sons by his two wives. Yudhishtira was born from Dharma, Bhima from Vayu, Arjuna from Indra and two twins from the Ashvins. He further adds that they grew up in the forest in the Himalaya foothills and came up to Hastinapur as grown-up boys after their father's death and soon became proficient in the science of archery ( I.55-6 ). Sauti tells us ( I.113 ) that when Pandu came to know that he could not have his own children, he tried to persuade Kunti to beget them through a brahmin. He told her that he himself owed his birth to Krishna Dvaipayana, who had agreed to produce children in the wives of Vicitravirya for the preservation of the Kuru race. Kunti then told him that she had served sage Durvasa when he had come to her father's house as a guest and had received from him charms ( mantras ) by which she could beget children by invoking certain deities. Thus although all knew that they were not Pandu's sons, we find that none of them, not even Duryodhana, questioned their claim to the throne on that ground. They were all treated as Pandu's sons according to the Vedic rule that the child bears the name of the person who takes its mother's hand in wedlock. ( I.98, Sauti ). A doubt about the legitimacy of the birth of Pandavas is expressed only in I.74 added by the author of the Parvasangraha. But we find even as late as Sauti's time there was a well-established rule that a child born of a young wife, a

pregnant bride or a virgin was regarded as the offspring of the person who married her.<sup>1</sup> Krishna quoted this rule to Karna, when he tried to persuade him to join the Pandavas and told him that as the virgin son of Kunti, he was lawfully ( dharmatah ) the eldest son of Pandu and so entitled to become the king. Even Dhritarashtra conceded that the Pandavas had a better claim to the throne. For while counselling peace to Duryodhana, he asked the latter, how he could stake his claim to the throne, when his father was not entitled to it.<sup>2</sup> This adhyaya V.147, it may be noted, belongs to the Vaishampayana text.

There are, however, a few peculiar facts about the conduct of the Pandavas, which require closer examination, for instance their polyandrous marriage with Draupadi, their breaches of the rules of war and the two barbarous acts of Bhima in drinking the blood of Dushyasana after killing him and striking Duryodhana below the navel. Suta has tried to justify the marriage by recourse to two myths, the myth of the old maid who asked for the boon of a husband five times and the myth of the five Indras ( 1.189 ). The conduct of the Pandavas is susceptible of simple explanations, if we take into account their background and upbringing in a forest tribe. Their marriage with Draupadi is a case of fraternal polyandry, which was prevalent among certain tribes in Tibet, the Himalayas and their foothills. Yudhishthira himself admitted it, when Drupada objected to it on the ground that it was contrary to law and custom and asked how a righteous person like him could think of such a marriage. Yudhishthira first demurred and said that he was merely carrying out the wishes of his mother, who wanted them to share everything they got, but later he conceded that in this marriage he was merely following their traditional custom. However, after they spent a few years in Indraprastha, their

subsequent marriages were polygynous in character. Because of their tribal upbringing, the Pandavas were also less inhibited by the traditional rules of the conduct in war that were current in those times in Aryavarta. Further there is a common belief among more ancient tribes that a warrior could appropriate to himself the valour of his slain enemy by drinking his blood<sup>1</sup> and Bhima might have acted on this belief in drinking Dushyasana's blood after killing him.

In this adhyaya we are mainly concerned to see how the additions came to be made by the redactors to the Vaishampayana text. As the epic came to be known as the Mahabharata after the additions made by Suta and Sauti, father and son, their contributions to the different parvas will be considered together. Suta describes in graphic detail the incidents of Mbh. briefly mentioned by Vaishampayana. These relate to Jatugrihadaha, Hidimbavadha, Bhima's marriage with Hidimbaa, Bakavadha and the Svayamvara of Draupadi ( all in Adi ), Pandavas' acquisition of half the kingdom and their defeat in the dice game ( Sabhaa ), Pandavas' sojourn in the forest and the story of the birth of Karna ( Aranyaka ), and Pandava's stay in the palace of Virata in the guise of palace servants and the defeat by Bhima and Arjuna of the Trigarta and Kaurava forces who had gone there to lift the famous cattle of Virata kingdom ( Virata ). Some of the important stories added by him do not find even a cursory mention in the introductory chapters of the Vaishampayana text. These are the story of Draupadi's being dragged to the assembly hall after Yudhishthira staked her and lost in the dice game ( Sabha ), the ghoshayatra and Draupadi's abduction by Jayadratha ( Aranyaka ) and the infatuation of Virata's general Kicaka for Draupadi, his death at the hands of Bhima ( Virata ) and Draupadi's lamentation over the massacre of her brothers and sons and Krishna's curse on Ashvatthama ( Sauptika ). Suta has not made any additions to the war books, namely Bhishma, Drona, Karna, and Shalya

1. Theodor H. Coster ( ed. ) : *The New Golden Bough*, A Mentor Book, New York, 1964, p. 541.

1. Mbh. V.138.9. Sauti.

2. VM. V.147.30.

parvas. But he has made additions to the Stri, Ashvamedhika, the Ashramavasika, the Mausala, the Mahaprasthanika and the Svargarohana parvas. He has described Gandhari's lamentation over the death of her sons and other war heroes ( Stri ) and the performance by the Pandavas of the Ashvamedha sacrifice ( Ashvamedhika ). In the ashramavasika he recounts the retirement of king Dhrita-rashtra, Gandhari and Kunti along with Vidura, to the forest and their tragic end in a forest conflagration. In the last three parvas, he relates the civil war which took place between the Yadava tribes, the deaths of Krishna and Balarama, the decision of the Pandavas to end their earthly career and their long trek to the Himalayas, the abode of the gods.

Sauti starts the Mbh. story with the snake-sacrifice of king Janamejaya and the story of Astika, and after giving the legends of Dushyanta and Shakuntala, and Yayati and Devayani, he traces the origin of the Kurus to Bharata, the son of Dushyanta and that of the Yadavas to Yadu, the son of Yayati. Some of the important additions made by him include the sojourn of Arjuna in the forest and his abduction of Subhadra, sister of Krishna, the burning of the Khandava forest ( Adi ), the Rajasuya sacrifice ( Sabha ), a graphic account of Krishna's visit to Hastinapura in connection with his peace mission and the welcome given to him by the Kauravas ( Udyoga ).

But the majority of the episodes added by the Suta and Sauti relate to the members of the Bhargava clan. Of the Bhargava episodes, only Vishvamitropakhyana ( 13.4 ) belongs to the Vaisampayana text. It explains how as a result of the exchange of carus ( magic potions ) Vishvamitra became a brahmin and Bhargava Rama became a mighty warrior. Suta has added the Aurvopakhyana ( 1.169-173 ), Kartaviryopakhyana ( 3.115-117 ) and the Sukanyopakhyana ( 3.122-125 ), which deal with the birth of Aurva, the birth of Bhargava Rama and the marriage of Cyavana with king Sharyati's beautiful daughter Sukanya. Sauti gives in adhyaya 60 of the Adiparva the genealogy of the Bhargavas, and it will be noted

that almost all of them, Cyavana, Aurva, Ruchika, Jamadagni, Bhargava Rama, Ruru etc. find a prominent mention in these episodes. In particular, the birth of Bhargava Rama and his martial exploits seem to have had a peculiar fascination for the bards.

According to the statistical study, the author of the Harivamsha which forms a supplement to the Mbh. has the C-style, which is entirely different from the styles of Vaishampayana, Suta and Sauti. This style occurs in verses in the Aranyaka, Shalya and Shanti parvas and so they too have been added by this author. The Harivamshakara has made the largest additions in the Aranyaka by contributing as many as 158 adhyayas out of 299 adhyayas. The adhyayas 13-90 recount Arjuna's encounter with Lord Shiva and his acquisition of the pashupata astra from him. The adhyayas 141-178 contain the encounter of Bhima with the Ramayana hero Hanuman, Pandava's visit to the royal sage Arshisena and their fights with Yakshas. Harivamshakara has further added the adhyayas 33-54 to the Shalyaparva, which describes the pilgrimage undertaken by Balarama during the period of the Bharata war.

According to the statistical study, as stated before, the adhyayas 308 and 309 which belong to the Beta group have been added by the author of the Parvasangraha. Adhyaya 308 contains the Sulabha-janaka-samvada in which Sulabha expounds to Janaka the doctrine of thirty entities called kalaas, which belong to the embodied being. In adhyaya 309, Yudhishtira asks Bhishma how Vyasa's son Shuka became completely indifferent to the world. Bhishma recounts to him the discourse of Vyasa to Shuka, in which he told Shuka that everything in this world is transitory and advised him to take to the life of renunciation.

The first three adhyayas of the Adiparva give a brief history of the growth of the heroic poem into an encyclopaedia of myths and legends and a religious and philosophical tract.

But the most important contribution made by the author of the Parvasangraha is the enumeration of the adhyayas and stanzas in the different parvas. It was found that the adhyaya total 1995 of the critically constituted text exceeded the Parvasangraha count of 1948 adhyayas. This is in spite of the fact that the total count of verses in the critical text falls short of the Parvasangraha total by about 8 per cent. The author of the Parvasangraha has obviously rearranged the adhyayas perhaps by merging the adhyayas with very few verses in the adjoining adhyayas and breaking up the bigger adhyayas.

Now the question arises, how do we account for the discrepancy between the Paravasangraha figures and the verse counts of the critically constituted text. Further the Mbh. text contains in addition to the Anushtubh shlokas long metre stanzas such as tristubhs and also prose passages in some adhyayas. It has been suggested by M.M. Haraprasada Shastri that the discrepancy between the number of verses in the Critical Edition and the Parvasangraha counts is probably due to the fact that the author of the Parvasangraha had taken the shloka in its restricted meaning of 32 syllabic units and counted everything in the text down to the numerals in terms of this unit. Firstly it presupposes that the author of the Parvasangraha had before him the critical text, which is unlikely as the latter had been reconstructed on the basis of the available Mbh. manuscripts. Most probably the author of the Parvasangraha had before him a Vulgate (Dn) version of the Mbh. Secondly it is doubtful whether this unit of measurement was ever adopted by the Brahmanical and epic writers. The Bhagavadgita is said to contain invariably 700 stanzas, which means that each tristubh is counted as one stanza and that the adhyaya colophones and the uvaca entries are ignored.

In his paper, the Parvasangraha of the Mahabhrata,<sup>1</sup> Prof. D.D. Kosambi points out that 32 syllabic unit of measurement

is traditionally adopted in prose counts of the Jain and Buddhist works. Kosambi has examined the question as to which of these two methods gives a close fit to the (observed) counts of the stanzas in the Critical Text to the Parvasangraha counts, by using statistical methods. He found that by taking the stanza as a unit, the observed number came to be far below that of the Parvasangraha count. On the other hand, the application of the chi-square test disclosed that the 32-syllabic unit brought the observed number of the shlokas in the Critical Text extraordinarily close to the Parvasangraha count. He, however, added that the chi-square test gave a significant discrepancy only for the Aranyaka. This significant discrepancy cannot be ignored on the ground suggested by Kosambi that the Critical Editors after Sukthankar did not follow his method meticulously, as the Aranyakapava was critically edited by Sukthankar himself. The discrepancies between the critical Edition counts and the Parvasangraha figures are satisfactorily explained by what Sukthankar calls 'the spurious passages and repetitions, which have been excluded by him from the main texts and shown in the Critical Notes and Appendices. This also confirms Sukthankar's theory of 'the fluid text' in which the fluidity applies not only to the wavy lines but also to the stanzas.<sup>1</sup>

Sauti starts the Mahabharata with the history of the most illustrious family of the Bhrigus which, he says, is respected even by the celestials such as Indra, Agni and the Maruts (I.5.5). The occasion is as follows : Sauti Ugrasravas had gone to the hermitage of Kulpati Shaunaka to recite the Mahabharata at the twelve-year sacrificial session held by that sage in the Naimisha forest. Since Shaunaka was busy with his daily round of religious duties, the assembled sages asked him to wait until they were joined by the Kulpati. When Shaunaka arrived, he did not ask Sauti to narrate the Bharata story, but said that he

I. JAOS, Vol. 66, No. 1, 1946, pp. 110-117.

1. For a fuller discussion, see paper VII, MMG, pp. 227-232.

would like him to relate the history of the Bhargavas.<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, the eight adhyayas I. 5-12 constituting the Paulomaparva are entirely devoted to an account of one branch of the Bhrigu clan as represented by Bhrigu-Cyavana-Pramati-Ruru-Shunaka. Here we are concerned with the story of Ruru, as it has some relevance to the Mahabharata story. Ruru was betrothed to be married to Pramadvara, daughter of nymph Menaka. But before they could get married, she was bitten by a venomous snake and died leaving Ruru desolate. By his magical power, however, he could revive her by giving up half of his life to her and then married her. He then took the vow to destroy all the snakes in the world. One day he came across a harmless old snake as a result of a curse pronounced upon him in his former life. The sage told Ruru how Janamejaya's sarpasatra was stopped by Astika, but did not tarry to tell him the story. Ruru subsequently heard this story from his father Pramati ( 1.12 ). In the Anushasana, however, we get a different genealogy of Ruru. There we are told that Bhrigu's son was Gritsamada, who according to tradition, was the author of the second mandala of the Rigveda and that the eleventh descendant of Gritsamada was Pramati, father of Ruru, whose son was Shaunaka.

The Astikaparva ( I.13-53 ) tells us that Janamejaya had started a campaign against the Naga king Takshaka to avenge himself of the death of his father Parikshita, who was treacherously killed by the Naga king Takshaka. In this episode we are told how Astika, son of Takshaka's sister, approached king Janamejaya and persuaded him to stop the carnage of the nagas. While the story of the snake-sacrifice is relevant to the epic story, the story of the snake-sacrifice is not even remotely connected with the events or characters of the epic. It is, therefore, obvious that the latter story has been introduced by Sauti to flatter Kulapati Shaunaka. This is also admitted by Shaunka who says, " I am well-pleased with thee, O Sauti, for

1. Mbh. I - 5.3.

narrating this story starting with the Bhrigu race. Pray, tell me now the story as composed by Vyasa. As the name of Shaunaka indicates, he was a descendant of Shunaka, who belonged to a branch of the Bhrigu clan.

In the Sambhavaparva, Sauti has added Arjuna's sojourn in the forest, his abduction of Subhadra, Krishna's sister, and the burning of the Khandava forest, as a joint exploit of Arjuna and Krishna. The epic nowhere mentions the reasons as to why Balarama was opposed to the marriage of his sister to Arjuna, who was a well-known warrior and friend of Krishna. Sauti states that Krishna himself advised Arjuna to abduct her, as one could not depend upon a woman to make the right choice in a svayamvara. The opposition of Balarama is, however, understandable as Subhadra was the daughter of Arjuna's maternal uncle, and the marriages between such cousins were not looked upon with favour in the North. The Pandavas also had to clear the Khandavaprastha region for settlement, as the kingdom which was given to them by king Dhritarashtra was a thick forest area.

The adhyayas 1-45 in the Sabha consisting of the sub-parvas, Sabha, Mantra, Jarasandhavadha, Digvijaya, Rajasuya, Arghabhiharana and Shishupalavadha, have been added by Sauti. When the Pandavas established their rule at Indraprastha, the supporters of Yudhisthira urged him to perform the Rajasuya sacrifice. When Yudhisthira sought the advice of Krishna, the latter said that it was an excellent idea, but he could not hope to be a sovereign, as long as Jarasandha, the mighty king of Magadha, was alive. Accordingly Bhima, Arjuna and Krishna went in disguise to Magadha and obtained admission in the palace of Jarasandha. When Jarasandha met them as was his custom to receive noble guests who had taken religious vows, they disclosed their identify and challenged him to a duel. Jarasandha chose to fight with Bhima, whom he regarded as his equal in valour, and was finally killed by him. Then the four brothers of Yudhisthira set out in four different directions to conquer the world and returned victorious with a

lot of wealth received as tribute from the friendly as well as conquered kings. As was the custom Pandavas invited these kings to the Rajasuya ceremony. When the time came for honouring a royal guest, Yudhisthira after consulting grandsire Bhishma, decided that this honour should go to Krishna, Shishupala, the king of Cedi, did not like this and raised a loud and vehement protest. Although he was related to the Yadavas, he had always sided with their enemies, Kamsa and Jarasandha and was hostile to them. When he became too abusive and vituperative, Krishna cut off his head with his discus.

Suta has elaborated the simple dice game in a graphic tale in the Dyuta and Anudyuta sections of the Sabhaparva. In the Dyutaparva ( adhyayas 56 and 57 ) he tells us how Yudhisthira, after forfeiting his wealth and kingdom in the game, staked himself, his brothers and his wife Draupadi. Karna then suggested that since the Pandavas had lost all their property, even the clothes that they were wearing now belonged to Duryodhana and asked Dushyasana to seize the garments of the Pandavas. As soon as Karna uttered these words, the Pandavas flung off their upper garments. Duryodhana then commanded Dushyasana to bring Draupadi to the court. Dushyasana brought Draupadi to the assembly hall who was in her menses and so was scantily attired. When he tried to disrobe her, Bhima swore to slay him in the battle and drink his blood. When Duryodhana bared his thigh and showed it to Draupadi with a leer, he also vowed to crush the latter's thigh. Partly due to Draupadi's spirited speech in the assembly and partly due to bad omens, the blind king realised that the matter had gone too far and tried to make amends by granting freedom to the Pandavas and restoring their kingdom to them. These incidents, if true, are very serious indictments against the Kauravas and have evoked universal sympathy for the Pandavas. But they do not find even a cursory mention in Vaishampayana text. It is also revealing that Bhima does not accuse Dushyasana of this outrage after he had wounded the latter fatally and was about to drink his blood.<sup>1</sup> The statistical study shows that the three

verses ( II. 43-45 ) were added by Sauti later.

In the Aranyaka Suta describes the sojourn of the Pandavas in the forest. It does not contain any adhyayas of the Vaishampayana text. In all Suta has added 99 adhayayas in this parva. The adhyayas 91-140 describe the visits of the Pandavas to places of pilgrimage and also contain some legends. The Ghoshayatra section ( 225-245 ) describes the visit of the Kauravas to the Pandavas undertaken with the sole purpose of humiliating them by the vulgar display of their wealth. This, however, ended in their extreme humiliation, as they were held captive by the gandharvas whose territory they had crossed and were released by Arjuna on the advice of Yudhisthira. The adhyayas 248-259 narrate the abduction of Draupadi by the Sindhu King Jayadratha and her rescue by Arjuna. This incident has been elaborated further by Sauti and Harivamshakara in the Dronaparva. In the Kundalaharana Suta recounts the virgin birth of Karna by the sun from Kunti and the generous gifts of inborn coat of mail ( kavaca ) and ear-rings ( kundala ) by Indra to Karna, although Indra knew that thereby he was making Arjuna vulnerable to him ( III.295.299 ). Sauti has not added any war stories to the Aranyakaparva. Harivamshakara had added the adhyayas 13-90 to Aranyakaparva in which he describes Arjuna's encounter with Lord Shiva in the disguise of Kirata and his acquisition of the pashupata astra and Arjuna's visit to Indraloka to secure divine weapons. The adhyayas 141-178 contain the encounter of Bhima with the Ramayana hero Hanuman, Pandava's visit to the royal sage Arshishena and their fight with the Yakshas.

The whole of the Virataparva has been added by Suta and Sauti, the latter contributing the adhyayas 30-62. The first 29 adhyayas recount the stay of the Pandavas in the disguise of palace servants of king Virata, the death of the Virata general Kichaka who made advances to Draupadi at the hands of Bhima, and the Trigarta king's plan to invade the capital of

Virata and lift his valuable cattle with the help of the Kauravas. In adhyayas 63-77, we read about the invasion of the capital of Virata by the Trigarta and Kaurava armies. When Virata returned after defeating the Trigarta king with the help of Bhima, he came to know that his son Uttara had also gone to fight with the Kauravas with Brihannada ( Arjuna ) as his charioteer. The Pandavas then disclosed themselves. Uttara too returned victorious and told that the victory was won only by Arjuna. In gratitude king Virata offered the hand of his daughter to Arjuna, who accepted her more befittingly as his daughter-in-law.

Of the 104 adhyayas added by the Suta to the Udyogaparva, the first 21 adhyayas describe the celebration of the wedding of the Virata princess Uttaraa with Abhimanyu. The relations and friends of Pandavas who had gathered for the wedding conferred as to the best way of regaining the kingdom for the Pandavas. All except Satyaki agreed that the possibilities of a peaceful settlement should be first explored by sending an envoy to the court of Dhritarastra. Accordingly a trusted brahmin in the court of Drupada was sent to plead the case of the Pandavas for the restoration of their kingdom. Dhritarashtra, however, sent him back with the message that he would send Sanjaya for negotiations. Sanjaya's and Lord Krishna's peace missions figure in the Vaishampayana text.

After the failure of negotiations, preparations for the war began in right earnest. Arjuna and Duryodhana made a special trip to Dvaraka to enlist the support of Balarama and Krishna in their cause. Krishna told Duryodhana that he was not going to fight in the war and asked him to choose between him and his large army. Duryodhana was content to have the army on the assurance from Krishna that he would not take an active part in the war. Arjuna, on the other hand, was happy to have his friend and guide by his side in the war. Balarama chose to remain neutral on account of Krishan's partiality for the Pandavas.

The first sub-parva now closed with an account of the visit of Shalya, king of Madra, to the Pandavas. On the way he was royally entertained by Duryodhana, who succeeded in enlisting his support in the war. Surprisingly when Yudhishthira came to know about it from the horse's mouth, he did not remonstrate with him for going over to the side of the Kauravas. Instead, he merely extracted a promise from him that when he would act as a charioteer to Karna, he would disparage him at the time of the latter's fight with Arjuna. Since Yudhishthira could not have foreseen that Duryodhana would beg Shalya to be the charioteer to Karna, this is clearly an attempt on the part of Suta to give some plausible explanation as to why Shalya, the maternal uncle of Nakula and Sahadeva, went over to their enemy's camp.

In the Sanjayaparva, Vaishampayana tells briefly that Dhritarashtra sent Sanjaya on a peace mission to the Pandavas and that on return he reported to him the outcome of his talks with the Pandavas ( adhyayas 48-50, 54 ). Suta has added the adhyayas 35-46 to fill up the intervening period between Sanjaya's departure and return. After Sanjaya left for Upaplavya, Dhritarashtra was filled with anxiety and so sent for Vidura for advice. These adhyayas contain the advice given by Vidura known as Viduraniti and also the philosophical discourse of Sanatsujata. Vidura told Dhritarashtra to treat the Pandavas and his own sons with equal affection and give the former their share of the kingdom. The adhyayas 51-69 ( excluding adhyaya 54 ) recounts the discussion which took place in the Kaurava court on Sanjaya's report and Duryodhana's final rejection of the peace terms. Janamejaya then asked as to why Duryodhana refused to heed the advice given by Bhishma and Drona. The answer given is that sound counsel is of no avail against obduracy and the story is told how Galava had to suffer great hardship because of his obduracy ( V.104-121 ).

The Udyogaparva ( 70 ), has been included in the

Vaishampayana text. However, on further examination, it was found to belong to the group 71-103 added by Sauti.<sup>1</sup> Yudhishthira said to Krishna that from Sanjaya's talk, he could gather that Dhritarashtra, blinded by affection for his sons, desired peace without ceding any territory to them. He, therefore, sought the advice of Krishna as to how they could secure their kingdom without losing merit. Krishna, in reply volunteered to go to Dhritarashtra's court and make a final effort to secure their interests without recourse to war. Yudhishthira advised him not to undertake the risk, as the wicked Duryodhana would stop at nothing. Krishna, however, felt that they should explore all avenues for peaceful settlement of the dispute, so that they should not incur blame later for not taking all the steps to avert the war.

The adhyayas 70-103 give a graphic account of Krishna's visit to Hastinapur, the elaborate preparations made by the Kauravas to receive him, his refusal to accept their hospitality and his stay with Vidura. The next day, after visiting Kunti, he went to the Kaurava court and made a stirring appeal to the Kauravas assembled there to maintain peace by restoring half of the kingdom to the Pandavas, which was rightfully theirs. In the adhyayas 122-129, Sauti describes the efforts made by Bhishma, Drona and others to persuade Duryodhana to accept Krishan's advice. He also mentions that at this time Bhargava Rama, Kanva and Narada happened to visit the Kaurava court, and they too advised Duryodhana to forsake vanity and wrath and make peace with the Pandavas. Although Dhritarashtra agreed with them, he said that he had no influence over his son and so was helpless. Then Dhritarashtra asked Vidura to bring his mother, but she too could not bring her son to see reason. As a last resort Krishna suggested to the assembly to place Duryodhana under restraint and settle with the Pandavas in

1. This group 70-103 has the sum of square within the adhyayas 263466 ( d. f. 297 ) with variance 88.71, which belongs to the B-style. It is also described as Bhagavadyana, which clearly indicates that Krishna had been recognised as divinity which had happened only in Sauti's time.

order to preserve the Kuru race. At the same time Duryodhana was plotting with Karna and Shakuni to seize Krishna and keep him in confinement in order to force the Pandavas to make peace on his terms. When Lord Krishna came to know about this, he disclosed his divine form and dazzled the Kurus assembled there. Lord Krishna then left the court with Satyaki and Vidura.

After taking leave of his aunt Kunti, Krishna made an attempt ( V.138-41 ) to win over Karna to the side of the Pandavas, by revealing to him the secret of his birth. Lord Krishna told him that by siding with the Pandavas, he would, as the eldest Pandava, become the king of Hastinapura and also the husband of Draupadi, but Karna declined to forsake his fosterparents and his friend Duryodhana. Kunti also tried to persuade Karna, but all that she could obtain from him was a promise that he would fight with Arjuna to the last, so that with whichever of them survived she would still have her five sons ( V.142-44 ).

There is no indication about the size of the armies in the Vaishampayana text. Although the stanza 149 is included in the group 145-149 shown to belong to Bharata, its mean square is 4018.4 and so seems to have been added much later. It gives fantastic figures for the Pandava army, which it says consisted of forty thousands chariots, sixty thousand elephants, two hundred thousand horse-men and four hundred thousand foot-soldiers.

The Amarakosha ( 1623 ) takes *vahini*, *pritana*, *camu* and *anikini* as synonyms meaning a division of the army. The epic also supports this usage. The whole army is referred to in the Dronaparva as *camu* ( 19.3 ), *pritana* ( 100.27 ), *anikini* ( 137.8 ) and *vahini* ( 139.9 ). The etymology of the compound word *akshauhini* ( *akshavahini* ) would give a clue to the size of the two armies. *Aksha* has two meanings, the axle of the chariot or a die. The latter meaning seems to be more appropriate as

gambling was a popular game among the elderly persons in the time of the Bharata war. The die has an elongated form with four faces, one pair of opposite faces having the markings one and four, and the other pair having the markings two and five. These markings on one side were known as krita and treta and on the other side dvapara and kali. According to Suta, the smallest division of the army in his time was a patti, consisting of one chariot, one elephant, three horsemen and five foot-soldiers. As for senamukha, gulma, gana and vahini each is said to be three times its preceding division. Thus a vahini would consist of 81 chariots, as many elephants, 243 horse-men and 405 foot-men. Then an akshauhini consisting of four vahinis, would have 324 chariots, as many elephants, 972 horse-men and 1620 foot-soldiers i.e. in all 3240 troops. Then the Pandava army would consist of 2268 cars, as many elephants, 6804 horse-men and 11340 foot-soldiers i.e. in all 22680 troops of all kinds; the Kaurava army would then have 35640 troops.

The size of the Pandava army as given by Suta compares well with the army of Porus, who gave a hard fight to Alexander. According to Diodorus, who has given an account of Alexander's conquests. (MGG. p.115), the army of Porus consisted of 1000 cars, 1500 elephants, 30,000 horse-men and 50,000 foot soldiers i.e. in all 82,500 troops. In Udyogaparva (49.61), Sauti gives a still more fantastic figure. The redactors of Mbh. seem to have inflated the sizes of the armies, which took part in the Bharata war to give it a global character. The author of the Parvasangraha has also further inflated the sizes of the armies by taking the terms vahini, pritana, camu and anikini three times of its preceding division, so that the size of the army is inflated twenty-seven times what was given by Suta.

Suta has made no additions to the war books; only Sauti and Harivamshakara have made additions to them. In adhyayas 61-70 of Bhishmaparva Dhritarashtra expresses his anxiety to Bhishma over the successive victories won by the Pandavas.

He said that he failed to understand why the Kauravas had to suffer defeats so often, when such military stalwarts as Bhishma, Drona, Karna and Shalya fought on their side. Bhishma replied that he had said more than once that the Pandavas were invincible as they were under the protection of Lord Krishna, the wielder of the horn (shringa). He told Dhritarashtra that the Lord of the universe had appeared in the human form and it was he who gave the Pandavas strength in the battle and protected them from danger. He, therefore, tried to impress upon the king that Duryodhana should be persuaded to make peace with his cousins by sharing the kingdom with them. This conversation shows very clearly that Krishna had come to be regarded as God in the time of Sauti.

In adhyayas 153-160, Suta tells us that after Duryodhana appointed Bhishma in over-all command of the army, he sent Uluka as an envoy to the Pandavas to give them the gratuitous advice to fight manfully. Duryodhana then requested Bhishma (161-169) to give his assessment of the heroic qualities of the chief warriors on both sides. When Karna came to know that Bhishma had rated him as ardharatha because of the loss of his kundalas and the curse of Bhargava Rama, he too told Duryodhana that he would keep out of the war so long as Bhishma was in command. Bhishma further told Duryodhana that he would also not fight Shikhandi, who had been born a girl and then changed her sex.

Sauti has added 63 adhyayas to the Dronaparva. In adhyayas 1-10, Sauti relates the investiture of Drona as a second general of the Kaurava army after Bhishma. The adhyayas 26-49 relate to the fight between Arjuna and Bhagadatta and the exploits of Abhimanyu before his death at the hands of the Kaurava warriors. Now in these adhyayas, the death of Abhimanyu came to be announced to Arjuna on his return from the battle with the Samshaptakas with a more telling and dramatic effect. The Pratijna section (52-63) in which Arjuna vowed to kill Jayadratha does not add any

significant events to the war. The only significant parts of adhyayas relating to the death of Ghototkaca are the felicitations offered by Krishna to Arjuna and Yudhisthira's panegyric of Krishna. Sauti has not added any adhyayas to Karna and Shalya parvas.

The adhyayas 26-49 of Dronaparva relate to the fight between Arjuna and Bhagadatta and the exploits of Abhimanyu before his death at the hands of the Kaurava warriors, which was facilitated by Jayadratha, who prevented the Pandava warriors from following him and giving him necessary protection. When Arjuna returned after defeating the Samshaptakas, he came to know the death of Abhimanyu at the hands of the Kaurava warriors and the part played by Jayadratha in it. He swore to kill Jayadratha, as stated in the pratijnyaparva (adhyayas 52-63). When Duryodhana came to know the oath of Arjuna to kill Jayadratha, he told Karna to defend him. Karna replied that though he had been wounded by Bhima and become tired, he would do his best to guard him against the attack. There was a furious battle at the end of which Arjuna killed Jayadratha to the jubilation in the Pandava camp and deep gloom and sorrow in the Kaurava army. In adhyayas (VII. 103-111) Sauti has tried to boost the exploits of Bhima in his fight with Karna. They are, however, inconsistent with his ignominious defeat later at hands of Karna.

Balarama does not receive much attention from Vaishampayana, as he did not take part in the war. Suta gives no indication about Balarama's going on the pilgrimage thereafter. It is Harivamshakara who has incorporated in the Shalyaparva an account of Balarama's pilgrimage, which Sukthankar rightly calls 'an obvious digression.' Rama visited all the places sacred to the Bhargavas such as the Ramatirtha, Syamantapancaka etc. When he arrived at the latter place, he met Narada who told him that most of the Kaurava warriors had been killed, and that if he made haste, he could witness the mace

fight between Bhima and Duryodhana, which was to take place shortly.

Bhargava Rama then went to the battle-field and saw that both Bhima and Duryodhana were ready for battle. To the people assembled there he said, "Two and forty days have passed since I left home. I had set out under the asterism Pushya and have returned under the asterism Shravana" (IX.33.5). From this G.V. Kavishvara<sup>1</sup> has deduced that the battles were fought on alternate days with one day's rest after each battle. There is absolutely no basis for this in the Vaishampayana text, which gives a contrary statement on the last day of the war. The verse (IX.3.27) clearly states that seventeen days had gone by until that day, since this terrible war began. The fact seems to be that the so-called riddles of the epic have arisen from statements made by different redactors without taking care that they did not conflict with the statements of previous redactors.

When Balrama saw that Bhima struck Duryodhana foully on his thighs, he lost his temper and raising his plough rushed towards Bhima. Lord Krishna, however, held the rushing Balrama tightly in his massive and well-rounded arms and addressed him thus : "There are six kinds of advancement that of one's own friends, the advancement of one's friends' friends, decay of one's enemy, the decay of one's enemy's friends and the decay of one's enemy's friends' friends. The Pandavas are our natural friends, being the children of our aunt. We have ties with Pandavas both by birth and interest and so in their prosperity lies our prosperity. Moreover Bhima had made the vow in the assembly that he would break the thigh of Duryodhana with his mace. Duryodhana was also cursed by Maitreya that his thighs would be crushed by Bhima." When he found that Balrama was still not satisfied, he added, "Pray calm down and do not give way to wrath. Know that Kaliyuga

1. *Mahabharata Yuddhaci Kalagananatmaka rahasya* (in Marathi), Nagpur,  
pp. 47-61.

is at hand and remember the vow made by the son of Pandu. You must grant that Bhima has only discharged his obligations due to his hostility and vow." Balrama was not, however, convinced and felt that all this talk about duty was a sham ( dharmacchala ). He said finally that Duryodhana was a fair warrior, who having sacrificed his life on the altar of battle, had attained to glory. With these words he mounted his chariot and set out for Dvaraka, leaving the Pandavas and Krishna cheerless.

Suta has added the adhyayas 11-18 of the Aishikaparva and all the adhyayas of the Striparva. The Aishikaparva adhyayas describe the inconsolable grief of Draupadi when she came to know the massacre of her sons and brothers by Ashvatthama. Draupadi implored her husbands to avenge their deaths and get for her the shining jewel which Ashvatthama bore on his forehead. The Pandavas went immediately in search of Ashvatthama and found him hiding himself on the banks of the Ganga. In the fight that ensued, Ashvatthama acknowledged defeat and surrendered his jewel to Bhima. Before, however, doing so, he took a blade of grass ( ishika ) and charging it with a mantra of destruction, said, " May it destroy the race of the Pandavas. " It went straight to the womb of Uttaraa who was then expecting and would have destroyed the embryo but for the intervention of Lord Krishna, who saved the child's life. This child was Parikshit who became the king of Hastinapura after Yudhisthira.

In the twenty-seven adhyayas added by Suta in the Striparva, we find Dhritarashtra and Gandhari mourning over the deaths of their sons and warriors. When Dhritarashtra came to know of the death of Duryodhana at the hands of Bhima, he was beside himself with grief. Sanjaya, Vidura and Vyasa tried to console him. Vyasa said that no one can change what has been ordained by the gods. Sanjaya then advised that they should perform the obsequies of the dead warriors. Dhritarashtra then set out followed by Gandhari and thousands

of wailing ladies and proceeded towards the field of battle. When Yudhisthira heard about this, he too set out to meet his uncle and aunt, followed by Krishna, Satyaki, Draupadi and other bereaved ladies. Passing the Kaurava ladies mourning the deaths of their husbands and sons, he went to his uncle and touched his feet. Dhritarashtra embraced him and speaking a few words of comfort sought for Bhima. Sensing his evil intentions, Krishna pushed Bhima aside and presented an iron statue before him. Dhritarashtra, endowed with the strength of thousand elephants, crushed it in embrace. When he calmed down and felt contrite for what he had done, Krishna told him to calm down and that Bhima was safe. Eventually Dhritarashtra regained his calm, embraced Bhima and other Pandavas and resigned himself to the inevitable.

Thereafter the Pandavas went to see Gandhari. Sensing her mood, Vyasa, who happened to be with her, told her to bear her grief with fortitude and forgive the Pandavas. Gandhari said that what rankled most in her mind was that Bhima had killed Duryodhana treacherously by hitting him below the navel, and it was this that she found it difficult to forgive. When Bhima heard this, he went to her and said, " Mother, whatever wrong I did, I did for self-preservation. I could not have conquered your son in a straight fight. If I wronged him, did he also not wrong us in many ways ? Was it not he who had blameless Draupadi brought to the assembly hall and showed her his left thigh ? At that every moment I had vowed to avenge myself for his outrageous conduct by breaking his thigh. As a kshatriya I was by honour bound to keep this vow. Kindly forgive me. " Hearing this Gandhari was somewhat mollified and said, " Son, you could have at least spared one of my hundred sons, who could have become our staff in our old age. Where is the king ? Call him. " When Yudhisthira heard this, he approached her with folded hands and said, " Queen, this cruel Yudhisthira, who has killed your sons, stands before you. I am indeed a great sinner, and care

neither for life nor for kingdom. Curse me, I deserve it. " " So saying he fell prostrate before her and touched her feet. Gandhari heaved a great sigh and turned her face away. But as she did so, the corner of her eye fell on the toes of Yudhisthira and instantly the nails of his toes became charred black.

When they went to the field of battle, Gandhari saw the dead bodies of her sons, kinsmen and other warriors and became disconsolate with grief. Filled with wrath and sorrow at the senseless destruction that had taken place, she became agitated and ascribed all blame to Krishna. She accused him that he was powerful enough to have prevented the carnage, had he wished to do so. In a violent fit of anguish she cursed Krishna that in the thirty-sixth year from now on, he would see his sons, kinsmen and friends slaughtered in a civil war and he himself would perish in wilderness. She further said that the ladies of Yadava race too would lament over them, as the ladies of the Kuru race were doing then. The king then gave orders for performing the cremation rites of the dead warriors. Kunti then disclosed to her sons the secret of Karna's birth and asked them to offer seasamum and water as libation to their dead brother.

In the first few adhyayas of Rajadharma added by Sauti to the Shantiparva, we find Yudhisthira disconsolate with grief. He said that to him this victory was no better than defeat ( XII.I ) and refused to be crowned in spite of the entreaties of his brothers and wife. On being requested by Arjuna to intercede on their behalf, Lord Krishna narrated the well-known stories of sixteen kings of the past, who earned great merit by discharging the duties of the king. Vyasa then raised the discussion to a philosophical level and spoke at some length on man's responsibility for his actions. After all the Kauravas had committed many sins and had to suffer their consequences. If he too, in opposing them, had to commit some unseemly acts, he could atone for them later. Vyasa quoted the instance of Indra, who by way of atonement performed hundred sacrifices after the great war between the devas and the asuras and earned

the appellation of Shatakratu. Yudhisthira them desired to know in detail the duties of a king in normal and abnormal times. Vyasa said that the fittest person to give advice in the matter was Bhishma, who was lying on his death-bed. But Yudhisthira could seek his advice only after his coronation, as then it would be proper for him to ask questions concerning the duties of a king.

On the day fixed for the coronation, Yudhisthira set out in a grand procession, followed by queen mother Kunti, Draupadi, Subhadra and other ladies. When the procession entered the capital, they received a rousing welcome from all the citizens with one dissenting voice. One brahmin from among the crowd said that Yudhisthira, who had caused the death of so many kinsmen, was not fit to be a king. The assembled brahmins, however, recognised him to be Charvaka, the friend of Duryodhana and cursed him. As a result of this curse Charvaka fell down like a tree blasted by the thunderbolt of god Indra.

The adhyayas ( XII.40 ) added by Sauti describes the coronation of Yudhisthira in which Dhaumya, the family priest of Pandavas and other assembled brahmins sprinkled holy water on his head and on the head of his queen Draupadi. After the coronation ceremony was over, Yudhisthira offered grateful thanks to Lord Krishna, praising him by the recitaion of his hundred and one names. The next day they went to see their grandsire Bhishma. Lord Krishna told the dying grand old man the purpose of their visit and gave him the necessary strength to play effectively the role of a tutor. The advice tendered by Bhishma is contained in the Shanti and Anushasana parvas and will be described in adhyaya on Epic Polity.

The whole of the Ashvamedhikaparva, excepting the Uttanka episode ( adhyayas 51-61 ) have been added by Suta. After the funeral rites of Bhishma were over, Yudhishthira was again overwhelmed by grief. Vyasa then advised him to perform the ashvamedha sacrifice to atone for the destruction.

After securing the treasure left behind by Marutta in the Himalaya mountain as advised by Vyasa, Yudhishtira after due ceremony let lose the sacrificial horse and nominated Arjuna as the guardian of the horse. All the digvijaya accounts of battles undertaken by Arjuna are of a legendary character. The horse went as far as Manipura to the east and then travelled through Vanga, Pundra and Kalinga countries on the eastern seaboard and Dravida, Andhra, Raudra, Mahishika and Kollagiri territories to the South. They, however, show that Suta knew some countries in the south and the east which were not known to Vaishampayana.

Arjuna defeated Suryavarma, king of Trigarta, king Vajradatta, son of Bhagadatta of Pragjyotisha, and king Sharabha, son of Shishupala of Cedi. The horse went to Magadha and Arjuna defeated Meghasandhi, son of Sahadeva. In Sindhava country Jayadratha's wife Dushala came with her grandson and implored Arjuna to take pity on him and stop the fight, which he did. In Dvaraka, Ugrasena persuaded the Yadavas to receive Arjuna as a friend. In Gandhara, Arjuna defeated Shakuni's son, who fought valiantly. The dowager queen mother came on the scene and at her request Arjuna stopped the fight. In Manipura, its king was Babhruvahana, who is said to be Arjuna's son from Citrangada, a Naga princess. Arjuna asked him to fight like a kshatriya and in the battle that ensued both the father and son lost their lives. They were, however, revived by Arjuna's second wife, Ulupi, a Naga princess. After Arjuna returned victorious with the sacrificial horse, Yudhishtira performed the ashvamedha sacrifice with great pomp and spendour. Suta has however, added the Nakula episode to say that in his view the ashvamedha sacrifice with its lavish expenditure did not equal in merit the gift of flour which a starving family made to a guest.

All the succeeding parvas have been added by Suta. In the Ashramavasikaparva, we are told that after living in Hastinapura for fifteen years, Dhritarashtra decided to lead the

life of a hermit in the forest. Although the other Pandavas treated him with proper respect, Bhima never missed an opportunity to give him pinpricks. Vyasa, however, assured Yudhishtira that the old king was not leaving because of any grievance, but because he wanted to enter the vanaprastha according to the royal custom. With Dhritarashtra went his wife Gandhari, his brother Vidura and his charioteer Sanjaya. With Gandhari went Kunti, mother of the Pandavas, in spite of her sons' entreaties to her to remain with them and enjoy the fruits of their victory. Kunti told them that while she had stood by them and encouraged them to win back their kingdom, she had now to think of her duty to the aged couple and also go through the discipline of the forest life before she joined their father. After passing through Kurukshtetra and reaching the Ganga, they went to the hermitage of Vyasa and settled there.

A year after the departure of Dhritarashtra and others to the forest, Yudhishtira, along with his brothers and womenfolk, paid a visit to them to see how they were passing their days. The surviving widows and orphans also went with them. Yudhishtira met the old king and made enquiries about their health. The blind king too made kind and personal enquiries about all of them and gave the Pandava king useful advice about rajadharma (XV.33). Yudhishtira enquired about Vidura, who was nowhere to be seen and was told that he had gone to the forest. Yudhishtira went in search of him and, when he found Vidura and enquired about his health, the latter made no reply but merged his limbs, breath and senses into those of Yudhishtira, until he became lifeless. After some time Vyasa too came there and divining the thoughts uppermost in the minds of the ladies, gave them a special boon. He told them that if they were to take the bath in the Ganga after sunset, each one of them could see her husband, sons and other relations in their human form. As a special favour he also gave divine vision to the blind king and Gandhari, so that they too could see their sons, grandsons and other warriors. Vyasa further told the

widows that if they wanted to join their husbands in the other world, all that they had to do was to enter the Bhagirathi. It all came about as Vyasa had foretold and many ladies of noble birth and character were united with their respective husbands in the next world.

After passing a month in the company of the blind king, Yudhishthira returned to the capital. Two years thereafter Narada brought the news that all the three, Dhritarashtra, Gandhari and Kunti had perished in a forest conflagration. This news caused great commotion in the royal palace. Thereafter Yudhishthira went to the river Ganga with his family and gave funeral offerings in the name of the departed. Thus passed away the remaining members of the older generation of the Kuru race.

The Mausalaparva added by Suta describes the inter-necine war which broke out between the Yadava clans thirty-six years after the Bharata war. The seeds of this civil strife had already been laid in that war; as Kritavarma, the chief of the Bhoja clan, fought on the side of the Kauravas, while Satyaki, the chief of the Vrishni and Andhaka clans, joined the side of the Pandavas. The Yadavas had gone for a picnic and had spent the whole day in drinking and merry-making. When liquor began to work, Satyaki taunted Kritavarma that he had attacked sleeping soldiers and thus brought disgrace to their tribe. Kritavarma retorted that this jibe ill-fitted one who had butchered Bhurishrava, whose right hand had been unjustly cut off by Arjuna, when he was sitting in a yogic position preparing for death. From words they came to blows and then a regular fight ensued. All the Yadavas joined the fight on one side or the other and the fight swiftly developed into a civil war.

When Krishna saw that his people were destroying themselves as predestined, he sent his charioteer Daruka to bring Arjuna from Hastinapura. Then he went in search of his elder brother and found him sitting alone on the coast and slowly breathing his last. "The time has come for me to go

too," he said to himself and sat in a yogic posture in a solitary place. A hunter, by name Jara, who was passing by, mistook his foot for a deer's face and shot an arrow at him, which went clean through his body and killed him. The hunter discovered his mistake too late and begged for his forgiveness. Krishna thus ended his earthly career and went to heaven where he was greeted and felicitated by the celestials.

When Arjuna went to Dvaraka after receiving this sad news from Daruka, he found it desolate and without a protector, with only Vasudeva, father of Krishna, surviving. When he went to see Vasudeva, the old man complained bitterly that Krishna took no steps to prevent the tragedy. The day after this meeting, Vasudeva also died and Arjuna had to prolong his stay for performing the funeral rites of Vasudeva. After performing these rites for Vasudeva, Balarama and Krishna, he left with the forlorn Yadava ladies and Vajra, the sole surviving grandson of Krishna. After they left, the city itself, we are told, was washed away by strong tidal waves of the western sea. Their tribulations were not yet over; for on their way they were waylaid by Abhira tribes, whom Arjuna found himself powerless to check. Many of the ladies voluntarily chose to go with them. Some of them like Rukmini and Jambavati preferred to enter the fire, while others like Satyabhama decided to join a hermitage. Arjuna took the remaining ladies and children to Kurukshetra and installed prince Vajra as a ruler at Indraprastha. Arjuna, thereafter, went to the hermitage of Vyasa to seek an explanation of these tragic events. Vyasa said that the times had changed and that they had to face the facts such as they were or else end their earthly career.

After taking stock of the dreadful events that had taken place, the death of Krishna and the failing powers of Arjuna, the Pandavas decided to end their earthly career. As a preliminary to this, they undertook the prithvi-pradakshina i.e. circumambulation of the known world. Before starting this pradakshina, Yudhishthira appointed Parikshit, the grandson of

Arjuna, as his successor with Yuyutsu as the regent. In the last lap of their journey, when they strode northwards to mount Meru, the renowned abode of the gods, Draupadi and the four Pandava brothers dropped down dead through sheer exhaustion. Yudhisthira ascribed the fall of each one of them to some specific human foible, namely Draupadi's partiality for Arjuna, Sahadeva's affectation of wisdom, Nakula's pride in his prowess and Bhima's gluttony. Yudhisthira continued his solitary trek to heaven, accompanied by a dog, who had joined the party right from the beginning, as his sole companion.

Now Yudhisthira had to pass the final test of loyalty to his companion who had accompanied him on the journey. The God of justice, Dharma, had followed him in the form of a dog, and when Yudhisthira refused to enter the heaven without his companion, Dharma himself appeared and told him that he had passed the final test and could enter heaven in his human form. But when Yudhisthira entered heaven, he saw Duryodhana enjoying facilities due to heroes who die on the field of battle. He was filled with rage and said that he thoroughly disliked the idea of having to spend his days in his company. When he enquired about his wife and brothers, he found that they were in hell and when he saw their torments in hell, he cursed Dharma ( XVIII.3 ). Then both Indra and Dharma appeared before him and explained eschatology to him so that he could appreciate the operation of dharma. Lord Indra told him that as he had deceived Drona by pretending that his son was dead, he had to be brought to hell and shown the torments of his brothers and wife in hell by an act of illusion. He then saw his brothers and wife Draupadi enjoying themselves in heaven. Then as instructed, Yudhisthira took a bath in the celestial Ganga and shed his mortal frame. He became transfigured and free from every trace of anger and hatred. While the Pandavas went to their respective fathers, Yudhisthira entered Dharma, his father and found ultimately real peace and happiness ( XVIII.4 ).

Many of the events described by the subsequent narrators

in the elaboration of the Vaishampayana text belong to the domain of myths and folklore. Nevertheless a few of them may contain some historical truth. For instance, the retirement of Dhritarashtra along with Gandhari, Kunti and Vidura in the forest and their subsequent deaths in a forest conflagration may not be without some historical basis. The civil war between the Bhoja and Vrishni tribes could have also taken place during the life-time of Krishna, as the seeds of dissension had already been sown in the Bharata war. The submergence of Dvaraka is also attested by archeological excavations carried out by Sankalia in this regard, who, however, places the date of its submergence in the second century B. C. The submergence of Dvaraka, however, occurs in the Mausala parva, which has been ascribed to Suta ( 5th century B. C. ) on the basis of group variance. However, it is found that the adhyaya XVI.8, which describes this submergence, could have been composed by the author of the parvasangraha, who lived in the first century B. C.<sup>1</sup>

Suta Lomaharshana has made two important changes in the story of the Mahabharata. Firstly, his composition shows a clear bias in favour of the Pandavas and against the Kauravas. For instance, in the Ghosha yatraparva ( III. 225-243 ) he describes the visit of the Kauravas to the Pandavas in their period of exile, undertaken with the express purpose of humiliating them by the vulgar display of their wealth. However, the result of this visit was exactly the opposite, as the Kauravas had to suffer intense humiliation themselves on account of their ignominious defeat at the hands of the gandharvas and their subsequent rescue by the Pandavas. Further Suta has incorporated two incidents in the Mbh. story to extenuate, if not condone, some of the palpably wrong actions of the Pandavas. The adhyayas 56 and 57 of the Sabhaparva, tell how Yudhisthira, after losing all his wealth and kingdom, staked himself, his brothers and wife and how,

<sup>1</sup>. The mean square of XVI.8 is 3395.6 with variance 37719 ( d. f. 9 ) and so discloses the Beta style.

when he lost this game too, Draupadi was brought to the audience hall of king Dhritarashtra by Dushyasana in a half-naked condition while she was in her menses. This incident has been included to justify the two barbaric acts of Bhima, namely drinking the blood of Dushyasana and striking Duryodhana below the navel against the rules of mace fight. If Jayadratha was killed by a strategem, did he not try to abduct Draupadi and so deserve it? These two incidents have been responsible for evoking universal sympathy for the Pandavas. Secondly, this redactor speaks of the Pandavas as having performed the Ashvamedha sacrifice, of which there is no mention in the Vaishampayana text. It is further stated that Arjuna went to conquer the eastern parts of the country, which indicates that this author was familiar with those geographical regions. This second redaction seems to have come from the pen of a bard in the court of a great king in the line of Purus. Evidently this great king could not bear to think that his illustrious ancestors should go down in history without an ashvamedha sacrifice to their credit. In adhyaya IX, this king has been identified as king Prasenajit of Kosala.

We shall now see how Suta had tried to defend Pandava's marriage with Draupadi and their breaches of the rules of war. Vaishampayana has faithfully recorded the attempts made by Kauravas to poison Bhima, to burn the Pandavas in the house of lac at Varanavat and finally to send them into exile by deceitfully defeating them in a game of dice, in which they finally succeeded. On the other hand, he has also brought on record the polyandrous marriage of Pandavas with Draupadi, their breaches of the rules of war and the two barbarous acts of Bhima in drinking the blood of Dushyasana and stamping the head of Duryodhana with his foot. The polyandrous marriage of the Pandavas must have appeared loathsome to an agro-pastoral society which had adopted the patrilineal system. Likewise the breaches of the rules of war must have struck them, to say the least, as unbecoming of the victorious heroes of the Mbh. war. Suta has tried to minimise the personal responsibility of the Pandavas for their actions by the not so

convincing employment of the device of boons and curses and by adding some incidents which are not mentioned by Vaishampayana.

Suta has tried to defend the polyandrous marriage of Draupadi with the five Pandavas by recourse to two myths. Vyasa tells the Pandavas ( 1.157 ) and also Drupada ( 1.189 ) the story of the old maid, who practised severe penance to obtain a husband. When Lord Shiva appeared before her and asked her to choose a boon, she begged for a husband five times. Lord Shiva took her literally and said that she would have five husbands in the next birth inspite of her protests that she wanted only one husband. Vyasa also told Drupada the story of five Indras. Lord Shiva crushed the pride of Indra by asking him to join four other Indras, who were held captive in a mountain cave. He then told them that they would be born as Pandavas and then return to heaven. Shri, the goddess of wealth, was then asked to take birth as Draupadi, so that the five Pandavas could have a proper mate ( 1.189 ).

Among the aberrant actions of the Pandavas, the killing of grandsire Bhishma, who had brought up the Kauravas and Pandavas and showered equal affection on them, strikes one as an outrageous conduct on the part of the Pandavas. When Ambaa, the Kashi princess, found that neither Bhishma, who had carried her off from the syayamvara, nor her lover Shalva would accept her hand, she practised austerities and obtained a boon from Lord Shiva that she would slay Bhishma in her next birth. Thus it could be said that Bhishma was fated to die at the hands of Amba, who had been born as Shikhandi to wreak her vengeance on him. It was also necessary to offer some defence for killing the venerable Drona, their military tutor and their well-wisher. Drupada, who had slighted Drona and was deprived of half his kingdom by Arjuna acting on behalf of his tutor, had performed a great sacrifice for the birth of a daughter who could wed Arjuna and of a son who would slay Drona. His son Dhristadyumna, who became the commander of the army

of the Pandavas, was thus destined to slay Drona. Karna, who had obtained the knowledge of astras from Bhargava Rama under a false pretence, was cursed by the latter that this knowledge would not come to his aid at the crucial time ( VIII.29.6 ). He was also cursed by a brahmin whose cow he had unintentionally killed that the wheel of his chariot would sink in the earth ( 8.29.3 ). Sauti seems to have added that Duryodhana was also cursed by Maitreya that Bhima would break his thigh ( III.11.34 ).

In order to defend the breaches of the rules of war by the Pandavas, Suta has further added three incidents of which there is not even a cursory mention in the introductory adhyayas ( I.55-57 ) of the Vaishampayana text. The story of Draupadi's abduction by Jayadratha ( 248-257 ) in the same parva has been included in order to absolve Arjuna of any blame for killing him. But the most damaging incident added by Suta is the outrage alleged to have been perpetrated by Dushyasana in dragging Draupadi to the assembly hall like a common slave after Yudhisthira had staked her and lost in the dice game.

Suta has depicted two provocative scenes in the Dyutaparva to justify the barbarous acts of Bhima in his final combat with Dushyasana and Duryodhana. Karna suggested that since the Pandavas had lost all property, even the clothes that they were wearing now belonged to Duryodhana and so asked Dushyasana to seize the garments of the Pandavas and the robes of Draupadi. As soon as Karna uttered these terrible words, the Pandavas flung off their upper garments. But when Dushyasana started to disrobe Draupadi by force, Bhima loudly vowed to rend his breast and drink his blood ( II.61.40.46 ). Later when Duryodhana bared his left thigh before Draupadi, smiling leeringly at her, Bhima became furious with rage and swore to smash his thigh in the battle ( II.63.12-14 ). This is how Suta has tried to defend Bhima's actions, namely that Bhima as a kshatriya was bound to carry out his vows, which he had made under conditions of extreme provocation. Bhima too,

when accused by Gandhari of his foul play with Duryodhana, defended himself by saying that he was only acting in the interest of self-preservation and fulfilment of his vows.

These incidents, if true, are very serious indictments, and they are the stock accusations which the Pandavas and more particularly Krishna make against the Kauravas whenever they are blamed for breaking the rules of war. But as stated before they do not find even a cursory mention in the adhyayas of the Vaishampayana text ( 1.55-57 ). It is also revealing that Bhima also does not accuse Dushyasana of this outrage against Draupadi after he had wounded the latter fatally and was about to drink his blood ( 8.61. 11-14 ). In this connection, the conversation between Krishna and Duryodhana, who was lying mortally wounded after his mace fight, is revealing. After the accusations and counter-accusations against each other were over, Duryodhana said that he had always given a fair fight and this reply was greeted by the gods ( IX.60. 51-54 ). The gods would hardly have condoned the outrage against Draupadi and her abduction by Jayadratha and so it stands to reason that the two shlokas ( IX.60.43,45 ) relating to these accusations were added later on. There is also clear statistical evidence that the Dyuta and Anudyuta Parvas ( II.46-72 ) and the abduction of Draupadi ( III.248-257 ) were added by Suta.

Sauti has brought about a still more fundamental transformation of the epic. To him the Bharata war was not a fratricidal war between the Kauravas and Pandavas but the struggle for supremacy between good and evil. It was because of this that J. Dahalman and A. Ludwig questioned the authenticity of the war and interpreted the epic as an allegory in which Pandavas and Kauravas respectively represented dharma and adharma or light and darkness. Perhaps he or his mentor Bhargava Shaunaka felt that the ordinary defence of self-preservation was not sufficient to justify the stratagems employed by the Pandavas in the war. He has, therefore, brought about an important change in the epic, which is to deify Krishna and to project Arjuna as the great war hero with Lord

Krishna as his divine guide. In the Gita ( XV.33 ) Lord Krishna declared himself to be the supreme God, who had chosen Arjuna as his instrument for carrying out his will. He told Arjuna that as the Destroyer he had already decided that all the Kaurava warriors would meet their death in the war and it was left to him to carry out his will. Sauti goes a step further than Vaishampayana and Suta and says

" Where there is Krishna there is righteousness;  
And where there is righteousness there is victory. "<sup>1</sup>

Now as observed by Sidhanta ( p. 25 ) whenever the Pandavas make a breach of the rules of war, it is sought to be condoned on the ground that the divine incarnation had counselled such conduct and surely ordinary human laws could not be applied while judging the actions of divine Krishna. As observed by Sidhanta, this does not seem to support a development in the standard of morals as suggested by Hopkins.<sup>2</sup>

The question arises as to why Suta found it necessary to vindicate those actions of the Pandavas which did not accord with the moral code of the warriors. He has spared no efforts to show that the war took place because Duryodhana was actuated solely by greed and ambition and did not follow the dictates of dharma. That this was not due to the improvement of moral standards is seen from the fact that Suta only repeats the formula of Vaishampayana, " Where there is righteousness, there is victory. "<sup>3</sup> The general view in those times was that the actions of Pandavas were covered by appaddharma, as they were necessitated for self-preservation. Perhaps Bhargava Shaunaka might have felt that the appaddharma did not afford sufficient justification for the breaches of the war code, which must have struck him, to say the least, as unbecoming of the victorious heroes of the Bharata war. At his instance, Suta may

1. VI. 62.34; XIII - 153-39.

2. JAOS. xiii, pp. 61 ff.

3. yato dharmas tato jayah. SI. V. 39.7, VI. 117.33, VII. 158A-162.

have tried to mitigate, if not condone, the wrong actions of the Pandavas. The scene of disrobing Draupadi in the assembly hall by Dushyasana does not find even a cursory mention in the Vaishampayana text. This incident has been included to justify the two barbarous acts of Bhima, namely the drinking the blood of Dushyasana and striking Duryodhana below the belt. This incident invented by Suta has been responsible for evoking universal sympathy for the Pandavas. As we saw before, there is a natural explanation for the acts of the Pandavas ( See pp. 78-79 ).

After repeating the apaddharma formula of Vaishampayana,<sup>1</sup> Suta presents the following as the moral dictum ( bharata-savitri ) of the Mbh. :

With raised hands I am crying hoarse,  
But no one listens to me.  
From dharma proceed wealth and pleasure,  
Why doesn't one resort to it ?  
Not for pleasure, nor for fear, nor for greed  
Should one give up dharma even to save one's life;  
Perennial is dharma,  
But pleasure and pain are a passing phase.  
The Self is eternal,  
But the cause of its embodiment is transient.<sup>2</sup>

It is possible that this cry of despair may have been occasioned by some contemporary events. A minister named Punika of the last Vitihotra king of Avanti is said to have killed his master and anointed his own son Pradyota as a king in the sight of the kshatriyas.<sup>3</sup> Ajatashatru, the crown prince of Magadha, put his father Bimbisara to death and seized the throne of Magadha.<sup>4</sup> When his patron king Prasenjit of Kosala

1. SM. XI. 13-9, 17-6.

2. SM. XVIII. 5. 49-50.

3. PHAI, p. 146.

4. Ibid. 209.

was temporarily absent from the capital, Digh Charayana, his commander-in-chief, installed prince Vidudabha on the throne of Kosala. The ex-king set out for Rajagriha in order to seek the help of Ajatashatru to recapture his throne, but he died of exposure outside the gate of the Magadha capital. This shows that the moral standards in those times had deteriorated and Shaunaka may have thought it proper to reiterate them with the help of Suta and Sauti.

Sukthankar mentions that the Bhargava influence is also responsible 'for the incorporation into the epic of large masses of didactic material, concentrated chiefly into the Shanti and the Anushasana, especially so far as it concerns the Dharma and Niti elements.' He adds that 'Dharma and Niti elements are just the two topics in which the Bhrigus had specialised and with which their names are prominently associated.' Almost all the passages on polity and philosophy have been added by Suta and Sauti, who must have gathered their material from their mentor Shaunaka. For instance, Suta has added the questions of Yaksha to Yudhisthira in Adi, the Vidura-niti, the discourses of Sanatsujata in Udyoga, the dialogue between Bhrigu and Bharadvaja, Shamyakagita, Mankigita, the dialogues between Vasishtha, Bhrigu, Yajnavalkya and Pancashikha with Janaka in Shanti and the Anugita in Ashvamedhika. Sauti has contributed the Bhagavadgita, many adhyayas of Rajadharma, Utatthayagita, Vamadevagita, Vicakhnugita, Haritagita, Vritragita, Parasharagita, and a number of interesting dialogues dealing with important philosophical questions.

The Mokshadharma in Shantiparva is philosophically the most important in the Mbh. next in importance only to the Bhagavadgita. In the Mokshadharma seventy-five adhyayas, namely adhyayas 168-185, 224-247, 291-307 and 338-353 have been contributed by Suta. The first two groups contain the life story of Shuka and the Vyasa-Shuka dialogue dealing with the categories of existence and the two ways of life, the way of

action and the way of knowledge. The adhyayas 291-307 contain the dialogues between Vasishtha and Karalajanaka, Bhrigu and Janaka, dealing with Sankhya and Yoga. The adhyayas 338-353 extol the way of life known as Unchhavritti in which a person lives on the grains gleaned after the reapers have left. As stated before, the Vaishampayana's Bharata does not contain any legends and folklore. Their object is to illustrate how the practice of dharma and niti leads to prosperity and morality, while its neglect conduces to misery and immorality.

The above additions made by Suta and Sauti have been referred to by Hopkins as 'unnatural additions' made to the epic. The epic now contains a number of discourses on dharma and niti elements in which Sauti has made an attempt to show how an ideal society should function. This is how a number of discourses on dharma and niti elements have found their way in the epic. Most of the political, religious and philosophical passages added by Sauti are to be found in the Bhagavadgita, the Rajadharma and Mokshadharma and the Dana and Dharma sections in the Anushasana. The myths, legends and folklore added by both Suta and Sauti, exemplify how great men, heroes and sages and great women observed truth and moral values in their life and achieved distinction in this world and went to heaven or earned salvation after death. The epic passages on philosophy and myths and legends will be dealt with adhyayas 15 and 18 in part II respectively.

## Adhyaya - 5

## HARIVAMSHA AND THE PURANAS

The Harivamsha exhibits the C-style except for twelve adhyayas including the Ushasvapna which belongs to the Beta style. Harivamshakara has appended it to the epic as a supplement ( khila ). It is, however, doubtful if the Harivamsha can be called a supplement of the epic as it was appended to the epic eight centuries after Vaishampayana and nearly three centuries after Suta and Sauti. Moreover the accounts of Krishna's early life in Gokula as given in Harivamsha and the Brahma, Vishnu, Bhagavata and the Brahmavivarta puranas are not only different, but also inconsistent and mutually contradictory ( Pusalkar, p. 61 ). In view of this the historical basis of Krishna's early life among the cowherds in Gokula is very much open to doubt. It is also to be noted that the Critical Edition of the Mbh. does not mention Nanda and Yashoda, the foster parents of Gopala Krishna: if Krishna had spent a happy childhood in Gokula as stated in the Harivamsha, it is strange that Krishna never bothered to visit his foster-parents, who are said to have brought him up with loving care. There is no mention of such a visit in the Mbh. This seems to support the view of Nanimadhaba Choudhuri<sup>1</sup> that Gopalakrishna was a

deity of the Abhira origin, who later came to be identified with the epic hero, Vasudeva Krishna.

The term *itihasapurana* which occurs in the Chhandogya up.<sup>1</sup> seems to refer to the Mbh., as the Ramayana is named *adikavya*. The term *purana* is mentioned in the Atharvaveda<sup>2</sup>, but it is very much doubtful whether it had assumed the independent form as in Vayu Purana. Perhaps the term refers to the dialogue hymns of the Rigveda, which Oldenberg styled as *akhyanas*, or dramatic tableaus as held by Max Muller and Levy or as ancient ballads as described by Winternitz or the *Gatha Narashamsis* of the Brahmanas which were recited or acted in sacrificial sessions and on the other festive occasions. Doubtless there seems to have been floating material of ballads, legends and folktales, which were dramatised at sacrificial sessions or domestic festivals, which later came to be incorporated by the bards or minstrels in the epics and the puranas. There is no evidence at present to support the view of Pusalkar ( p. 4 ) that earlier versions of the puranas existed in the period of the Bharata or Ramayana war.

Dr. Vaidya in his Critical Notes ( p. 755 ) states that the Harivamsha was given the form of a purana text at a later stage and in support quotes the summary of Harivamsha given in Agnipurana ( adhy. xii ) where it starts from adhyaya XX. However, according to the statistical study the first twenty adhyayas also exhibit the C-style and so formed part of Harivamsha right from the beginning. But, there is not the least doubt that the Harivamsha satisfies the characteristics of a purana as stated in the classical definition of the term by Amarasimha ( 5th century A. D. ), which is also described in some puranas as *panchalakshana*. These five characteristics are stated to be creation ( *sarga* ), dissolution ( *pratisarga* ), genealogies

1. Nanimadhaba Chaudhari. Indian Cowherd God. JBORS. 1942. p.

1. *Itihasapurana Pancamo vedanam. 7.1.24.*  
2. AV. 11.7.24.

( vamsha ), ages of Manu ( manvantara ) and genealogies of kings ( vamshanucarita ). Vaidya has shown how these five characteristics are present in the Harivamsha. The first adhyaya ( 23-39 ) deals with creation, while the second adhyaya ( 1-6, 48 ) contains an account of dissolution and recreation. The seventh adhyaya ( 1-47 ) contains a full description of only the six past Manus and the Vaivasvata Manu. The description of the seven future Manas was added to the Vulgate later and has been relegated to the Appendix I ( No. I ). The divine genealogies have been given in the ninth adhyaya ( 1-9,35 ) and the incarnations of Vishnu are given in adhyayas 35 and 45. The geneology of the Ikshvaku kings is given in adhyayas 9 and 10 and that of Yadu in adhyayas 20 and 99. The Harivamsha is the only purana which is in complete agreement with the pancalakshana definition.

Dr. Dandekar ( p. 92 ) has pointed out some references in the Mbh. pertaining to the early life of Krishna in Gokul.<sup>1</sup> In his tirade against Krishna on the occasion of the Rajasuya sacrifice, Cedi king Shishupala derisively refers to his childhood feats such as killing of Putana, bull and the horse and the lifting of the Govardhan mountain. In the Mbh. V. 128, Sauti mentions his killing of the bull-demon Arishta, the ass-demon Dhenuka and the demon Chanura, which goes to confirm Dandekar's statement quoted above.

Most of these exploits are of a legendary nature, symbolising, as suggested by shrimati Bhattacharyaji,<sup>2</sup> the defeat of the various cults of the theriomorphic deities prevalent among the pastoral people, perhaps with the totemic worship of the ass, the bull, the snake and the elephant. Putana has been variously described as a nurse, a bird or a terrible

1. II - 30.10, 36-2, 38-4S, III -15.10; XII - 47.72. The verse III.1S has been added by Harivamshakara and the rest by Sauti.

2. Shrimati Bhattacharyaji. the Indian Theogony. p. 302.

demoness. The ancient surgeon, Shushruta mentions in the Uttaratantra ( 27.237 ) putana as a fatal children's disease. Dhruva<sup>1</sup> interprets the Putana story to mean that the benvolent God is supreme over the power harassing children. His lifting of the Govardhana mountain indicates his supercession of Indra as the foremost God.

As pointed out by Winternitz,<sup>2</sup> the Harivamsha is absolutely and entirely a purana which is also shown by the numerous, often literally identical coincidences with passages in several of the most important puranas, such as Brahma, Padma, Vishnu, Bhagavata and especially Vayupurana. Harivamsha mentions the Vayu Purana and so if there are similarities between the two, the Harivamsha has borrowed from the Vayu. Ruben, after making a comparative study of Harivamsha with Brahma, Vishnu, Bhagavata and Brahma-vaivarta puranas<sup>3</sup> has concluded that the Brahma purana has borrowed its Krishna story from Harivamsha and not the other way round. As pointed out by Pande many scholars are agreed that the Harivamsha contains an ancient account of Gopalkrishna's life. Raichudhari considers that it is a standard work for the study of Krishna's early life. Ferquhar observes that Harivamsha gives a more reliable account of Krishna's early life than Vishnu Purana.<sup>4</sup> These views of eminent scholars go to establish that Harivamsha is a very old purana only next to Vayu. Since according to our present knowledge, all the puranas with the exception of Vayu were composed after the Mbh., if there are any parallel passages between them, we can safely say that the puranas, with the exception of Vayu, have borrowed them from the epic.

1. Dhruva. *Apana Dharma* ( Hindi ). p. 758.

2. HIL. Vol. I. p. 454.

3. Ruben. JAOS. Vol. 61. p. 124.

4. Ferquhar Religious Literature of India. pp. 139, 143, 144.

### Gopalakrishna Problem

It is only Harivamsha which deals with the life and history of the cowherd child – god Krishna in Gokula exhaustively. As pointed out by Dandekar, this cowherd god Krishna originated among the nomadic community of the Abhiras,<sup>1</sup> who followed the profession of cowherds. Vaishampayana neither mentions the Abhiras nor alludes to the childhood feats and pranks of Krishna in the cow-settlement at Gokula. Suta<sup>2</sup> mentions the Abhiras for the first time in the Mbh. and states that when Arjuna was escorting the Vrishni widows and orphans to Hastinapur after the death of Krishna, some Abhira warriors waylaid them and decamped with their treasures and beauties. Harivamsha ( IX-36 ) states that the tribe of the Abhiras was located in West Rajaputana, where the river Sarasvati disappeared. This location finds support in the Peryplus of the Erythrean sea, a Greek record of the commercial geography of the first century B.C.<sup>3</sup> Patanjali too mentions Abhiras and says that they were associated with the Shudras.<sup>4</sup> According to D. R. Bhandarkar, the Abhiras were of foreign origin, as both the Mbh. and the Vishnu Purana brand them as dasyus and mlecchas.<sup>5</sup> This argument is, however, untenable, as the terms dasyu and mleccha are commonly used in the epic to denote the aboriginal tribes and those outside the Aryan fold.

As regards the Gopalakrishna problem, some scholars doubt the identity of the Mbh. hero and the expounder of the Gita with the favourite of the cowherd lasses in Gokula. Winternitz, to quote one of them, holds that it is more likely that there were two or several traditional Krishnas, who were merged into one deity at a later date.<sup>6</sup> There is sufficient evidence to show that the Gopalakrishna element was added by

Harivamshakara. In his tirade against Krishna in the Rajasuya sacrifice, Shishupala, the king of Cedi, called Krishna a cowherd, but he was silent about his relation with the gopis. The passage containing the word gopijanavallabha, which suggests Krishna's dalliance with the gopis and which Garb thought to be a part of the original epic, does not occur in the Critical Edition. The compound gopijanapriya which occurs in the Chitrashala edition is also now shown to be a star passage,<sup>1</sup> but this also suggests that Krishna was a favourite of the gopis, Krishna's relations with the gopis do not figure in the contemporary Buddhist Jatakas,<sup>2</sup> but are found only in Harivamsha and later puranas.

In the Harivamsha, Krishna is said to have taken part as a grown up boy in dances with the gopis, which are described as rasa or hallisha ( HV.63 ). In tribal culture it is usual for young boys and girls to take part in communal dances, in which there is not even a hint of flirting or love-making. Even playwright Bhasa ( 3rd Century A. D. ) in his play Balacharita tells the story of Krishna's youth, in which hallisha sport is said to be an innocent dance.<sup>3</sup> In the Brahmapurana ( 189.20 ) occurs for the first time the story of a gopi, who after hearing the sound of Krishna's flute, was unable to leave and go to him because of the presence of elders and began to pine for him. This finds further elaboration in the Vishnu and other puranas. The dances are now represented as proceeding from a deep sensual love of sprightly love-lorn maidens for Krishna in the Bhagavata Purana and as gross carnality in the Brahmavaivarta Purana ( Pusalkar ). As regards his intimacy with Radha, neither the Harivamsha nor the Bhagavata Purana mentions it. The name Radha occurs for the first time in the Brahmavaivarta Purana, which belongs to the ninth century A. D. and so the Radha motif is a much later development in the Bhagavata religion.<sup>4</sup> Only in the Padma and

1. Dandekar: Vaishnavism and Shaivism in RGBI, p. 38.

2. SM. XVI - 8.

3. B. C. Law. TAI, p. 79.

4. I. 2-3

5. D. R. Bhandarkar Some Aspects of Ancient Indian Culture, p. 62.

6. Winternitz, HLI, Vol. I. p. 457.

1. 543x line 2, p. 304.

2. Raichaudhuri. EHVS. p. 73.

3. J. N. Farquhar; Outline of Religious Literature of India. Oxford 1920. p. 44

4. Chattarjee. Bulletin of the School of Oriental ( and African ) Studies. London. VII. pp. 457-466

Patala Puranas the place of an innocent tribal dance is taken up by playful amorous sports of Krishna with Radhaa and other gopis, with a strong element of devotional love.

Whatever studies have been undertaken so far in this regard have confirmed that the puranas have borrowed from the Mbh. F. Otto Schrader in Apocryphal Brahmapurana has shown that adhyayas 235-244 in this purana have been borrowed from different adhyayas of the Shantiparva, though many readings of the purana disagree with those of the latter. G. P. Dixit has compared the story of Yayati as found in the Mbh. and the Mastyapurana<sup>1</sup> principally from the metrical point of view and his conclusion is that the metres of the Matsya purana belong to a later period than those of the epic. M. V. Vaidya, after comparing the Tirthayatra in the Aranyakaparva<sup>2</sup> and Padmapurana has concluded that the latter has borrowed from the Bengali version of the Northern Recension of that parva. This shows that the Padmapurana is posterior to Harivamsha. As regards, Hopkin's view that the description of the different Sabhas in the epic to be late, it seems that the Mbh. is the source book of the puranas in this case. Only Hildenberg, after examining the relation of the Mbh. cosmology with that given in the Padma purana and other puranas had concluded that the Mbh. account is based on the Padmapurana.<sup>3</sup> Belwalkar, however, after giving quotations from both the texts has proved that the Padmapurana is also posterior to the Mbh.<sup>4</sup> Thus according to our present knowledge all the Puranas except Vayu were composed after the Mbh.

The puranic tradition has been ' floating and dynamic ' and has undergone numerous additions and revisions from time

1. G. P. Dixit. PBC V. pp. 721-788.

2. HM. III. 80-83.

3. L. Hildenberg. Die Kosmographische Episode in the Mahabharata and the Padmapurana. Stuttgart. 1934.

4. Belwalkar. Festschrift Thoma.s. pp. 19-28.

to time by priestly bards. The existing puranas number eighteen, but only a few of them contain the five elements referred to above. The same process which transformed the Bharata into Dharmashastra had also been at work here except that they seem to have been composed for sectarian purposes and that religious instruction was not their principal aim. In justification of this transformation, some of the mahapuranas themselves suggested that they should be dashlakshana i. e. possess ten characteristics. Thus the Bhagavata Purana adds<sup>1</sup> five additional topics, namely means of livelihood ( vritti ), incarnations ( raksha ), emancipation ( mukti ), the Self ( hetu ) and the refuge or Brahman ( apaashraya ). As pointed out by Harihara Shastri the Matsya Purana<sup>2</sup> says that the additional topics are righteous conduct ( dharma ), economic pursuits ( artha ), polity ( rajaaniti ), erotics ( kama ) and liberation ( moksha ). As observed by Pusalkar, even these comprehensive definitions do not cover the entire gamut traversed by the Puranas. As a result of this development, there was a tendency to dismiss the puranas as priestly products until the publication of Pargiter's Dynasties of the Kali Age ( 1918 ). With this a new development of puranic studies has been started. It should now be possible to disentangle the two threads by undertaking statistical studies of puranas and build up a history of the past dynasties of kings by checking the results of these studies with the epigraphic and numismatic evidence during those times.

Now the question arises why Harivamsha does not find a mention in the eighteen puranas. As Pusalkar has pointed out ( p. 25 ) the list of Mahapuranas is given in almost all puranas except for a couple of changes and runs as follows : Vayu, Brahma, Padma, Vishnu, Bhagavata, Naradiya, Markandeya, Agni, Bhavishya, Brahmavaivarta, Varaha, Linga, Skanda, Vamana, Kurma, Matsya, Garuda and Brahmanda. Some puranas read Shiva instead of Vayu and Devi Bhagavata instead

1. Bhagavata Purana. XI - 7.9-10

2. Matsya Purana, 53.66-69.

of Bhagavata. In order to accommodate these conflicting views, Pargiter takes their number to be nineteen by including Shiva and Vayu.<sup>1</sup> But as observed by Pusalkar, there is absolutely no reason for increasing the traditional number. This seems to be the correct view as Vayu is more ancient than Shiva which is mentioned in the Harivamsha only. As regards the claim of Devi Bhagavata, the puranas which describe the greatness of Shiva and Vishnu are entitled to be called Mahapuranas, as they had attained supremacy over other gods in the time of the Mbh. Perhaps Harivamsha has not been included among the Mahapuranas, as it has been always considered as a supplement of the Mbh.

As only Vayu Purana is mentioned in the Vaishampayana text, it is clear that this purana or its earlier version, if any, existed before the second century B. C. Pusalkar rightly says the extant puranas can be assigned to the early centuries of the Christian era. In order to determine the ages of the Puranas and the Smritis, it is necessary to bring out the Critical Editions of those puranas and apply statistical tests to determine whether each of them has a uniform-style or it exhibits different styles indicating their growth in subsequent periods.

## Adhyaya - 6

### DATING THE EPICS

In this adhyaya we shall first consider the stratifications of the Mbh. based on these statistical studies and then compare them with the periods revealed by the archaeological excavations. As stated before, there are five stratas or layers consisting of the Bharata of Vaishampayana and its four redactions by Suta, Sauti, Harivamshakara and the author of the Parvasangraha. Of these Suta and Sauti are separated only by a generation, being father and son, and so their redactions will be considered together. So also the subsequent redactions of the epic and its growth into a work of one lakh shlokas ( shatasahasri ) will also be clubbed together for reasons which will become obvious later.

As regards the shatasahasri, the statement of Dio Chrysostomos that the Hindus possessed an Iliad of one lakh verses and were well-acquainted with the sufferings of Priam etc. is evidently an allusion to Mbh. and so constitutes the earliest external evidence of its existence in the first century A. D. This view is held by Weber, Holtzmann, Pischel, Rawlinson and Winternitz.<sup>1</sup> The latter, however, adds that it is possible

1. Pargiter: ERE X . 448.

1. M. Winternitz, HIL, Calcutta, 1927, p. 465.

( according to Jacobi, probable ) that Dio's statement referred to an actual Indian translation of Homer. The grounds on which this latter view is held are not known. Even in the present times, it would be difficult to find a person sufficiently proficient in both Greek and Sanskrit to undertake this translation work and it would have been much more so before the 1st century A.D. There is also no reference to this translation in Sanskrit, Buddhist or Jain literature. In view of this one could safely agree with C. V. Vaidya<sup>1</sup> that Dio Chrysostomos statement constitutes direct evidence that the Mbh. of one lakh shlokas was well-known even in South India in 50 A. D.

The date of the third redaction of Mbh. and of Harivamsha can be determined from internal evidence and a terracotta find from Sugh assigned to the second century B. C. The latter contains an art depiction of Krishna learning Brahmi alphabets at the ashrama of guru Sandipani.<sup>2</sup> As this fact is not mentioned, in the Mbh. but mentioned first only in the HV ( Vishnu, 79.3 ), it fixes the date of HV. as second century B. C. This date also finds support from the internal evidence in the HV. which describes the brahmin general, who is supposed to restore the ashvamedha in the Kali age as audbijja i. e. ' plant-born '. Jayasval identifies him with Pushyamitra, who ruled from 187 to 151 B. C. This finds further confirmation in Kalidasa's Malavikagnimitra ( Act IV-14 ) in which Agnimitra claims to belong to the Baimbika-kula, where probably the term baimbika is connected with bimbika, a kind of plant.<sup>3</sup>

Further there are some passages in the Aranyaka 188 added by the Harivamshakara which lend support to the view that these additions were made during the Shunga period. The verse lines 64, 66 refer contemptuously to the edukas or

1. Mahabharata : A Criticism, Bombay, 1905, p. 14

2. V. P. Dwivedi, MMR, p. 127.

3. Raychaudhary PHAI, p. 369, Footnote 1.

Buddhist shrines as having ousted the temples of gods.

*edukan pujayisyanti varjayisyanti devataḥ | ( HM. III. 188-64 )  
edukacihna prithivi na devagrihabhushita | ( HM. III - 188.66 )*

This writer would not have made bold to say all this during the period of the Maurya rulers who patronised the Buddhist religion. This could have happened only during the reign of Pushyamitra or his successors when the Bhagavata religion grew in importance and became widely prevalent as testified by the inscriptions at Vidisha and Ghosundi.

In the Sarasvatopakhyanā of the Shalyaparva added by the Harivamshakara, it is mentioned that one Vriddhagarga had obtained, by dint of his austerities, knowledge of the planetary motions. Now an astronomer Garga Parashara is mentioned by Panini and probably this Garga is referred to as Vriddhagarga to distinguish him from a younger Garga, who had come into prominence during his time. The date of this younger Garga is fixed at 145 B. C. from a reference in his work to the invasion of Saketa by the Greeks. According to C. V. Vaidya,<sup>1</sup> this Greek king was Minander, but he is more likely to be Demetrios, a contemporary of Pushyamitra.<sup>2</sup> This goes to show that the third and fourth redactions of the Mbh., the Hariyamsha and Shatasahasri fall within the period IV ( 200 B. C. - 100 A. D. ), which is associated with the Mathura coins and Shunga terracottas. As the fourth redaction made by the author of the Parvasangraha falls between the third redaction by the Harivamshakara and the Shatasahasri, it must have been completed before the Christian era.

As regards Sauti's Mbh., there is direct astronomical evidence to show that Sauti could not have compiled it earlier than 450 B. C. According to S. B. Dikshit, an eminent astronomer the winter solstice in the Vedanga Jyotisha period

1. C. V. Vaidya, Mahabharata : A Criticism, Bombay, 1905, p. 212.

2. Raychaudhuri, PHAI, p. 384.

used to take place at the beginning of dhanishtha; at present its place is near about the commencement of purva ashadha and some years ago it used to be near uttara ashadha. It must have, therefore, been taking place near the shravana in some former age. Dikshit read shravanadini rikshani in Ashvamedhika 44.2 and thought that although it was not so stated explicitly, the very expression shravanadini conveyed that the winter solstice began in the shravana nakshatra. However, according to the Critical Edition, the correct reading is shravisthadini rikshani, where Shravistha is only another name for dhanistha. This would mean that even in the time of Suta, the winter solstice used to commence in dhanistha. Sauti, however, mentions in Adi 65.34 how Vishvamitra, in creating a parallel world, arranged for the winter solstice to begin in shravana. This new arrangement came into vogue according to Dikshit's calculations by about 450 B. C.<sup>1</sup> C. V. Vaidya agreeing with him says, "The receding of the winter solstice is due, as those who are conversant with astronomy are well aware, to the precession of the equinoxes and furnishes reliable data in fixing the limits, if not the actual date. The present Mbh. which contains a reference to the shravana beginning of the nakshatras cannot be earlier than 450 B. C.<sup>2</sup> Sauti's time, however, could not have been later than 450 B. C., as Lord Krishna mentions<sup>3</sup> that he is margashirsha among the months. This implies that the year began with the month margashirsha at the time Gita was composed. From the table given by John Bentley in his Historical view of the Indian Astronomy, V. B. Ketkar says that the year began with margashirsha in the cycle 699-452 B. C.<sup>4</sup> and so the age of Gita must be placed somewhere during this period. Sauti could not have been later than 452 B. C. as after that period the year began with the month of pausha.

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1. S. B. Dixit, History of Indian Astronomy, translated by R. V. Vaidya, Calcutta, 1969, Part I, p. 110.
  2. C. V. Vaidya, *Mahabharata : A Criticism*, Bombay, 1905, p. 17.
  3. BG. 10.35
  4. V. B. Ketkar : *Indian and Foreign Chronology*, Bomhay, 1923, p. 155.

From this it is evident that both Suta and Sauti must have been junior contemporaries of Prasenajit, king of Kosala, Udayana, king of Vatsa, Chanda Pradyota, king of Ujjain and Ajatashatru, king of Magadha. If so, it would be natural to expect that they lived under the patronage of one of them. In fact, we find that the mention of Prasenajit at four places in the Mbh. namely in the Sabha ( 8.20 ), Aranyaka ( 116.2 ) and the Shanti ( 153.13, 226.36 ). In the Aranyaka ( 116.2 ) this Prasenajit is said to be the father of Renuka, whom Jamadagni courted and married. The Prasenajit, who is referred to in the Shanti ( 153.13 ) is also different as he is said to be the son of Vrishadarbha. In Sabha ( 8.20 ) Suta says that Prasenajit was one of the royal sages who attended the assembly of the Lord of Death. In Shanti ( 226.36 ) he says that king Prasenajit attained to the very best world by gifting hundred thousand cows with their calves. Now in the 6th century B. C. Kosala appears to have occupied the rank afterwards attained by Magadha and to have enjoyed precedence as the premier state of Upper India.<sup>1</sup> Prasenajit, who was of the same age as Buddha, died almost in the same year and was favourable to the new movement. He was found calling upon the Buddha either to consult him or simply to enjoy conversation with him.<sup>2</sup> Prasenajit was famous for his charity. While Buddha was residing at Jetvana in Shravasti, the king gave gifts for a week generously. These gifts came to be known as asadishadana ( incomparable charity ).<sup>3</sup> He was a Paurava king and so had a direct interest in the glorification of the Pandavas. Probably, Suta and Sauti were influenced by him to undertake the redactions of the Mbh. in order to exalt the Pandavas.

It is seen that the description of cities, palaces and the digvijayas undertaken by the Pandavas at the time of the Ashvamedha and Rajasuya sacrifices occur in the additions made

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1. Oxford History of India, Vol. I, 1924, p. 31.
  2. The Cambridge History of India, Vol. I, 1922, p. 180
  3. Law, TAI, p. 128.

by Suta and Sauti. For the first time we find in the Adiparva that Kampilya and Ahicchatra are described as towns ( *nagara*, 128.4, 18 ) and the former is called *purottama* ( 126.15 ). A resident of a town is called *Paura* ( 134.5 ) or *naagara* ( 145.4 ). In the same parva, Sauti speaks of administrators of the cities ( *nagaradikrita* 134.7 ) and of master-builders ( *sthapati*, 47.14 ), well-versed in the art of construction of houses. Probably, the accounts of the assembly halls ( *sabhaas* ) of Indra, Yama etc. contained in Sabha 7-11 are also based on the halls of kings reigning at that time. Sauti mentions in Shanti 29 sixteen mahajanapadas, which remind us of the Buddhist account of sixteen states of considerable extent and power known as *Shodasha mahajanapadas*<sup>1</sup> which flourished in the 5th century B. C. The digvijaya accounts also seem to be modelled on such campaigns undertaken by Prasenajit, Udayana, Chanda Pradyota and Ajatashatru. For example, in the war with Vaishali, Ajatashatru is said to have made use of *mahaśilakantakaga* and *rathamusala*. The first was some kind of a propellant, which hurled big stones. The second was a chariot with a mace attached to it, which when driven with great speed, destroyed many troops.<sup>2</sup> Sauti mentions these weapons as *shataghnis* ( III. 221.34,7.108.40 ) and *rathashakti* or *rathashaktigada* ( XII. 4.18 ).

During this period agriculture and cattle-breeding had made considerable progress. Agricultural implements such as the hoe and the plough had come to be in regular use during this period. Sauti makes a reference to *langala* i. e. a hoe ( III. 10.10 ) and also mentions *hala* i. e. a plough ( III.241.37 ). As stated in the Udyogaparva ( 152.7 ), cutting instruments were also in use such as the axe ( *kuthara* ) and the pick-axe ( *kuddala* ), with which they could now fell the trees and break clods of earth. This facilitated the extension of agriculture to forest lands and also establishment of contacts with the eastern and southern parts of the country. A passage in the Udyogaparva states that land does

1. Anguttara Nikaya, PTS - I.213. IV - 252, 256, 260.

2. Raychaudhuri, PHAI, p. 212.

not yield a crop without rain, but also immediately adds that it can be watered with human effort ( V.77.2 ).

These facts are supported by the archaeological discoveries of agricultural tools such as the hoe, the ploughshare etc. and ring wells at Atranjikheda in Period IV of the NBC culture ( c. 600-250 B. C. ). Although the ring wells found at Atranjikheda in the NBP Ware complex were used mainly for drinking water purposes, it is possible that these people also constructed such wells for watering their lands. From the account given by Suta in the Ghosayatra ( 225-243 ) it would appear that there were cattle enclosures in which the cattle were kept and counted and calves branded. This was, therefore, a period of agro-pastoral society with considerable urbanisation and flourishing agriculture and stock-breeding activities.

This agro-pastoral character of the society finds further confirmation from the fact that by now the patrilineal society had come to be established, as is evident from the subordinate position accorded to their women-folk. The matrilineal system does not survive among people who grow food by ploughing the land and practise the herding and breeding of cattle on a large scale. The women are no longer free ( *na svatantrah hi yoshitah* ( I. 61.16 ) ). They do not stir now out of the house and show their faces even to the sun and the wind ( II. 62.5 ). Polygamy was viewed with favour, and the duty of a wife, as explained of all persons by Draupadi to Satyabhama was to work at home and please her husband and his mother ( III.222-224 ). In view of the urban development, this interval between Sauti's Mbh. and Harivamsha may, therefore, be considered synchronous with the NBP ware period.

Hence the interval between Vaishampayana on the one hand and Suta and Sauti on the other will have to be identified with the period before the NBP i.e. the P. G. Ware period. Although

1. tatra vai paurusam bryur asekam yatnakaritam. IV - 77.2.

Vaishampayana is mainly concerned with the description of the Bharata war, we still get a few glimpses of the life-style of the period in his work. His text is singularly free from the accounts of cities and palaces, and when the Pandavas want to settle their dispute with the Kauravas, they ask for five villages and not towns ( V.31.19 ). They grew their food without any agricultural implements<sup>1</sup> and supplemented their cereal food with meat obtained from hunting. Vasu Uparicara, father of Satyavati, left his wife, who was in her monthly course to hunt the deer as his forefathers had asked him to offer them venison on the shraddha day. The village towns were surrounded by thick forests and as there were no instruments for cutting the trees, the only method for clearing forests either for cultivation or habitation was to burn them. Thus when the Pandavas were asked by Dhritarashtra to rule the Khandavaprastha, Arjuna had to clear the forest there by burning it with the help of Krishna. The people at that time were constantly in fear of forest conflagrations, as the Vaishampayana text contains a number of similes connected with them. The discovery of a die at Alamgir also shows that these people indulged in gambling and perhaps settled their disputes of succession to ancestral property by the throw of dice. Probably, the Kauravas and Pandavas also first tried to settle their claim to succession to the Hastinapura throne by the dice game following this tradition. From this one may safely conclude that this accords with the P. G. Ware culture. The astronomical references in the Vaishampayana text are not sufficient to determine his age nor is there any epigraphic or numismatic evidence available for that purpose. In view of this the only evidence of which use can be

1. Although the Vaishampayana text does not mention either the hoe or the plough and they are conspicuously absent in the archaeological excavations in the P. G. Ware levels even at Atranjikhera, they find a mention in RV. and later Vedic works. The word langala is however, described in a number of passages as lance, pointed, well-lying and having a well-smoothed handle and may have meant a hoe. The word hala, which definitely means a plough, does not occur in the Vedas. But its synonyms sira and phala find a mention in the RV, and later Vedic literature. It is stated in the Taittiriya Samhita ( V.2 ) that the sira was so large and heavy that it had to be dragged by six or twelve oxen. See Vedic Index.

made is that of the genealogy of the Paurava kings. We know that Udayana ( Pali Udena ) was a contemporary of Buddha and outlived him by about ten to fifteen years. If we take the date of Buddha's nirvana as 487 B. C., then we can take the date of Udayana's death as about 475 B. C. Now according to the genealogy of the Paurava kings, Udayana was 24th in descent from Janamejaya ( both inclusive ). As Vaishampayana had recited his work at the snake-sacrifice of Janamejaya, we can fix his time as  $24 \times 20 + 475 = 955$  B. C., by taking 20 years as the average reign-period.<sup>1</sup>

As regards Ramayana, we saw earlier that Harivamshakara had based his Ramopakhyan in Aranyaka ( I.248-276 ) on a version of Ramayana. This is because he mentions by name epic Ramayana in the same parva ( 147.11 ) and has adopted with minor changes portions of Hanuman's soliloquy in the Sundarakanda of Ramayana for writing Sudeva's soliloquy in the Nalopakhyan. Now the name Ramayana occurs only in Balkanda ( 5.3 )<sup>2</sup> of the Ramayana, which all acknowledge to be a later addition to the epic. It is, therefore, obvious that a redaction of the epic Ramayana must have been available to Harivamshakara. Since the Ramopakhyan ends with a happy reunion of Rama with Sita, the Uttarakanda which describes the tragic end of Sita must have been added still later.

But from the internal evidence in the Mbh. the Ramayana, as we have it today seems to have undergone at least four clearly definite stages of development. Valmiki seems to have composed the kernal of Ramayana before 1000 B. C. and probably his original version consisted of about 12,000 shlokas, which is the extent of an ancient version known to Katyayaniputra, the author of the Mahavibhasha. ( Guruge, p. 45 ). Sauti ( 5th century B. C. ) seems to have known a redaction of Ramayana, which he calls Ramacharita, and this earlier name of Ramayana reminds

1. For a fuller discussion on the date of Buddha's nirvana and the genealogy of the Paurava kings.  
2. Critical Edition.

us of the superb Hindi poem Ramacharitamanasa of Tulsidas of the 15th century A. D. Probably the Buddhist influence, the descriptions of the city life and some of the philosophical passages in the Ramayana belong to this period.

Harivamshakara has added the three upakhyanas, Nalopakhyna, the Saugandhikaharana and the Ramopakhyna in the Aranyaka ( adhyaya 65 ), which have an important bearing on the interrelationship between the two epics Mahabharata and Ramayana. The paragraphs that follow are based on the two excellent studies by Sukthankar on the " Rama episode ( Ramopakhyna ) and Ramayana " and " The Nala Episode and the Ramayana " both of which are now included in the Epic studies VIII, V. S. Sukthankar Memorial Edition.<sup>1</sup> It is found that there is a striking similarity between the soliloquy of the brahmin Sudeva sent by king Bhima in search of his daughter Damayanti in the Aranyaka ( 65.7-25 ) and some lines in the long soliloquy of Hanuman sent by Rama in search of Sita in the Sundarkanda of Ramayana, sargas 13, 14, 17 and 28.<sup>2</sup> Sukthankar observes that this passage in the Mbh. is clearly marked from the rest of the poem by its ' florid style ' and ' a plethora of epithets and a rich embroidery of similes ' which is in keeping with the kaavya style of Ramayana. He further adds that it is very unlikely, may almost impossible that the Adikavi Valmiki would borrow a few verses from Nalopakhyna. The above passage shows that the Harivamshakara knew of the Ramayana and so his Ramopakhyna could not have been the source of Ramayana. Jacobi was the first to express the view that the Ramopakhyna was a careless abbreviation of the Rama epic.

But the issue as to who has borrowed from whom is clinched by one important difference in the two situations, which seems to have been overlooked by Harivamshakara. In the Ramayana,

Hanuman has been sent in search of Sita by Rama himself and so he knows exactly the state of his mind and so it is natural for him to say :

The Lord performs a difficult task  
in that, although separated from her ( i. e. Sita )  
he holds on to his body  
and does not sink through grief.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, Sudeva, who was sent on the errand by Damayantis' father Bhima, did not know the whereabouts of Nala and was not likely to be aware of his feelings for her. Hence as observed by Sukthankar, the words of the soliloquy are wholly appropriate in the mouth of Hanuman, while they are somewhat incongruous in the mouth of Sudeva. This should leave no doubt that Harivamshakara had copied faithfully the soliloquy of Hanuman and incorporated it in the Mbh. with a few necessary alterations. After excluding the common phrases which are repeated in both the epics, the author found that the number of common padas in these three episodes added by Harivamshakara is 270. This lends support to the view of scholars such as Jacobi, Winternitz down to Sukthankar that Ramayana in its present form was generally known as an ancient work before the Mbh. reached its present form. ( MMG, pp. 48-50 ).

We saw that Harivamshakara ( 2nd century B. C. ) had taken a version of Ramayana, as it came to be known then contained the first six kandas. This period also witnessed the growth of Vaishnavism as a counterpoise to Buddhism, and the many references to Rama and Krishna as the incarnations of Vishnu in the Balakanda of Ramayana and the Harivamshakara respectively are the direct results of this new religious trend.

1. *dushkaram kurute 'tyartham  
hino yad anaya pralshuh !  
dharayat�amani deham  
na duhkhanavasidati ( R. 5.14-17 )*

1. Epic studies, VIII, V. S. Sukthankar Memorial Edition, Poona, 1944, pp. 386-415.  
2. Critical Edition, Gaikwar's Oriental Institute, Baroda 1966.

The statistical study of Ramayana was undertaken by the author and its results were published in the Bhandarkar Oriental Series, No. 26 ( 1994 ) under the title The Ramayana : Its origin and Growth, A statistical study. ( ROG, for short ). This Ramayana was further expanded by Suta, Sauti, Harivamshakara and the author of the Parvasangraha, who had also made additions to the Mbh. The main features of the expansions made by them are given in chapter II ( ROG, pp. 11-30 ). There was still another redactor of the Ramayana, the author of the U-style who has added as many as sixty sargas ( 41-100 ) in the Uttarakanda. These sargas principally deal with the events subsequent to Rama's coronation, of which the two most important are Shambukavadha and Sitatyaga. The Ramopakhyanā does not refer to these episodes which is an independent corroboration that they did not form part of the original Ramayana ( ROG, p. 23 ).

We shall now show that not only Harivamshakara but also Sauti and Suta and Vaishampayana were familiar with Ramayana heroes and also with poet Valmiki. Sauti mentions Valmiki in Adi ( 50.14 ), Sabha ( 7.14 ), Udyoga ( 81.27 ) and Shanti ( 200.4 ). As the references in the Sabha and Shanti are to a Valmiki, who had practised severe penance, they could be taken to pertain to the author of Ramayana. Suta refers to Rama as son of Dasharatha in Adi ( 197-19 ). He further says in Virata ( 20.9 ) that his wife, daughter of Janaka, followed him to the forest in his exile and was abducted by a demon king. In the Aranyaka ( 299.18 ), he states that Vishnu as Rama lived in the house of Dasharatha and he later killed Ravana in battle with heroic effort. The Vaishampayana text also contains allusions to Dasharathi Rama, his brother Lakshmana and their adversaries Ravana and his son Indrajit. In Shalya ( 30.10 ) he states that the demon king Ravana was killed by Rama. When fierce combats are described between Mbh. heroes Vaishampayana has made comparison with Ramayana heroes. He also knew Valmiki, whom he mentions in Drona ( 118.48 ) and Anushasana ( 18.7 ). In the latter, Vaishampayana refers to Valmiki as bhagavan and so the latter must have lived at least two centuries before him.

Thus from the internal evidence in the Mbh. Ramayana appears to have undergone at least four clearly definite stages of development. Valmiki seems to have composed the kernel of Ramayana in the 12th century B. C. and probably his original version consisted of about 12,000 shlokas, which is the extent of an ancient version known to Katyayaniputra, the author of the Mahavibhasha.<sup>1</sup> Sauti ( 5th century B. C. ), as we saw, had known a redaction of Ramayana, which he calls Ramacharita, and this earlier name of Ramayana reminds us of the superb Hindi poem Ramacharitamanasa of Tulsidasa of the fifteenth century A. D. Probably the Buddhist influence, the descriptions of the city life and some of the philosophical passages in the Ramayana belongs to this period. We saw that Harivamshakara ( 2nd century B. C. ) had taken a version of Ramayana as the basis for his Ramopakhyanā. During this third stage of its development, the Ramayana, as it came to be known then, contained the first six kandas. This period also witnessed the growth of Vaishnavism as posing Rama and Krishna as the incarnations of Vishnu in the Balakanda of Ramayana and the Harivamsha respectively are the direct results of this new trend.

The incorporation of Uttarakanda in Ramayana seems to have taken place thereafter, but before 100 A. D., since the famous Buddhist Ashvaghosha refers to Valmiki in the Sundarakanda as the tutor of Rama's sons, which is mentioned only in the uttarakanda of Ramayana. The contents of the uttarakanda were also known to Vimala Suri, who is said to have composed his work 530 years after the nirvana of Mahavira i. e. about the middle of the first century A. D. Thus the final redaction of Ramayana seems to have taken place after the final shape of Mahabharata. These facts do not support the statement of Winternitz that the period of the growth of Ramayana falls within the longer period of the development of the Mahabharata.<sup>2</sup> It would be truer to say that the period of the development of the Mahabharata falls within

1. Ananda Guruge, The society of Ramayana, Mahergane, Ceylon, 1960, p. 28  
 2. Winternitz, HIL, I, p. 505.

the longer period of development of the Ramayana. I had stated ( MGG. p. 137 ) that more definite conclusions than these must await a similar study of the critical edition of the Ramayana with the application of the statistical method. The results of the statistical study of Ramayana were published under the title, the Ramayana : Its Origin and Growth, A Statistical Study, ( ROG, for short ) in the Bhandarkar Oriental Series, No. 26 ( 1994 ). The results of this study have been summarised at page 277 of ROG. The style R ( variance 105.34 ) has been identified as the style of Valmiki, as it contains most of the important elements in the Rama story. Ramayana was found to contain four more styles, alpha ( variance 48.45 ), B ( variance 77.73 ), C ( variance 180.21 ), Beta ( variance 629.97 ) and U ( variance 36.37 ) ROG ( p. 277 ). Thus the four styles after R disclosed the styles of Suta, Sauti, Harivamshakara and author of Parvasangraha. The U-style is entirely distinct from the other styles and contained later additions of Sitatyāga and Shambukavadha and the author of this style lived in the first century A. D.

In Pargiter's dynastic lists ( pp. 14-149 ), Parikshita I is shown at S. no. 73 and so is separated by twenty-one reigns from the Pandavas at s. no. 94. This is, however, contrary to the statement of Pandu that Shvetaketu had laid down the rule of monogamy for women not long ago. The geneology given in Mbh. ( 1.90, 41-45 ) is as follows : Kuru, Vidurath - Arugvat, Parikshit, Bhimasena, Pratishravas nee Pratipa. This geneology given by Sauti seems to be more authentic than Pargiter's geneology based on pauranic evidence. The disqualification incurred by the brothers of Janamejaya ( II ) seems to have been shortlived and Bhimasena succeeded Parikshita, not counting the short period during which his brother Janamejaya reigned. The date of Bhimasen who was removed by eight generations from Janamejaya, the grandson of Arjuna come to  $955 + 8 \times 20 = 1115$  i. e. about 1100 B. C. This is also the date of Janaka, Yajnavalkya and Indrote Devapi Shaunaka, who performed the

horse-sacrifice for Janamejaya II.

According to Pargiter's chronological table of rishis ( pp. 191-92 ), Indrota, Devapi Shaunaka is shown at s. no. 71 and Valmiki at s. no. 66. This means that Valmiki was only four generations earlier than Indrota Shaunaka and so must have belonged to the 12th century B. C. As Pargiter's table of rishis shows Vasishtha ( associated with Dasharatha ) at s. no. 64 and Valmiki at s. no. 66, Valmiki was only a generation later than Rama and so must have belonged to the latter part of the 12th century B. C. In his Ramayana too Valmiki does not claim to have met Rama; since had he done so, he would have proudly mentioned it ( ROG. pp. 59-60 ).

We shall now compare the stratifications of the epic based on the linguistic studies with the periods revealed by the archaeological excavations. As early as 1949, B. B. Lal paid a visit to the ruins of Hastinapura, the capital of Kauravas, located about sixty miles to the north-east of Delhi. He writes, " In the lower levels of the mound were found a fine grey ware with designs executed in black pigment ( hereafter called the painted Grey Ware ). This was superimposed by another class known to archaeologists as the Northern Black Ware paint which was found at Ahichatra, another site mentioned in the Mahabharata... Lal took a trial excavation at Tilpat, 11 miles south of Delhi... associated with the Mahabharata story, and it was gratifying to find there the same ceramic sequence as was observed at Hastinapura. This encouraged him further, and he planned a systematic exploration of over thirty sites mentioned either in the Mahabharata itself or alleged to have been associated with the story according to local tradition. The investigations more than fulfilled his expectations, since almost all the sites yielded the Painted Grey Ware from their lower levels.<sup>1</sup>

1. Ancient India, No. 10 and 11, Excavations at Hastinapura and other explorations in the Upper Ganga and Sutlej Basins, 1950-52, pp. 5-151.

The thirty sites which Lal had explored included Barnava, Bairat, Panipat, Baghpat, Indrapat, Kurukshetra, Mathura, the five strategic villages on the Yamuna system asked for by the Pandavas in order to avert the war etc. These are well-known sites connected with the Mahabharata story, and all of them exhibit the P. G. Ware at the lowest or the second lowest level. The discovery of P. G. Ware at all these sites shows that they are linked together by the same material culture. Lal<sup>1</sup> further found in the excavations at Hastinapura, the evidence of a big flood in the Ganga after the P G. Ware period. This seemed to him to support the Puranic statement "When the city of Hastinapura is carried away by the Ganga, Nicakshu will abandon it and will dwell at Kaushambi." (Vayu-Purana, 99.271). According to the genealogy given in the Puranas, Nicakshu was the fifth king from Parikshit II. The excavations at Kaushambi (G. R. Sharma, 1957-59) have also yielded bowls and dishes of grey ware, some of which also bear painted designs in black pigment. Lal<sup>2</sup> states that the coarser fabric and designs of this ware show that it represents a 'continuum' of the Hastinapura P. G. Ware and observes further that 'this is just the sort of evidence one may expect from a settlement which is later than but in continuation of another.' On the basis of these facts, Lal reasons that the material culture represented by the P. G. Ware is the culture of the people who fought the Bharata war.

It would be worthwhile to study the results of the excavations carried out at Hastinapura and Kaushambi, the capitals of the Kurū-Paurava kings, Ahicchātra, the capital of the North Panchala kings, and Mathura and Dvaraka, the towns associated with Krishna. The excavations at Hastinapura carried out by Lal (1950-52) revealed five occupation periods with clear gaps between them all. From bottom upwards, Period I was characterised by the presence of the ochre coloured ware. The principal ceramic industry of Period II was the Painted Grey ware,

consisting of bowls and dishes of fine-grained grey fabric, painted over with designs in black pigment. As stated earlier, this occupation came to an end because of a heavy flood in the Ganga, which washed away a considerable portion of the settlement. As time passed, the people reoccupied the site for the second time (Period III). They had discontinued painting the grey ware, which was however produced in much coarser fabric. This period is marked by a new kind of pottery, the northern black polished ware. This was made of a nicely levigated clay, well-fired, mostly jet-black or steel blue in colour, with an almost mirror-like surface. This period III came to a close because of a large-scale fire, traces of which are available throughout the site. After a temporary gap, the site was again occupied by about 200 B. C., as evidenced by the presence of coins of the rulers of Mathura and Shringa terracottas at the lower levels. The pottery was now plain red, but painted sherds were also available. The brick buildings of this Period reveal a thickly populated township. In the upper levels dated circa 300 A. D. imitation coins were discovered belonging to the reign of Kushana king Vasudeva. Period V does not concern us.<sup>1</sup>

The radiocarbon method of dating was not available in India at the time Lal wrote his report on Hastinapura excavations. He had, therefore, to depend upon the method of comparative stratigraphy for dating the P G. Ware. Satisfactory numismatic evidence was available for dating Period IV. From the lower levels of this Period were obtained five coins of Mathura rulers, including two coins of Sheshadatta who ruled during the 2nd century B. C. The occupation of Hastinapura after the fire (Period IV) may, therefore, be supposed to have begun sometime in the first half of the 2nd century B. C. After allowing for 100 years for the gap due to fire, Lal took the close of the Period III as 3rd century B. C. As the thickness of the occupation strata ranged from 5 to 9 ft., Lal placed the beginning of Period III early in the 6th century B. C. According

1. MMR, p. 54.  
2. MMR, p. 55.

1. Ancient India, No. 9, 1933, pp. 94-97, 140.

to Lal, such a dating was supported by the presence of the N. B. P were throughout this period.

As stated above, there was a gap between Period II and Period III on account of the desertion of the town due to the heavy flood in the Ganga. Lal, after taking note of the marked changes which had taken place in Period III, allowed for a period of 200 years for this gap and placed the end of the Period II as not later than the beginning of the 8th century B. C. As the occupational strata above the N. B. P level was 7 ft. he thought that even on a moderate estimate this strata would have taken about three centuries to accumulate. On this he reasoned that the P G. ware occupation at Hastinapura would have started at the beginning of the 11th century B. C. with a margin if any on the earlier side. The O. C. ware occupation would then be pushed back to the 12th century B. C. or even earlier.

Other scholars, notably Wheeler and Gordon, did not accept Lal's dates on the ground that Lal had given, with his bias towards older dating, longer duration to each gap between consecutive periods. They, with their bias towards later dating, placed the upper limit for the date of P G. ware occupation in the , 8th-7th century B. C."<sup>1</sup>

The earliest excavation at Kaushambi was carried out here by the Archaeological Survey of India in 1937-38. But since 1948 the University of Allahabad has been excavating this site under the direction of Prof. G. R. Sharma. On ceramic evidence a 16 m. thick deposit revealed here twenty-five structural phases, which the excavator has divided into four periods. The earliest Period I of Kaushambi is characterised by a sturdy red ware, followed by Period II associated with a decadent painted grey ware. Working back from the 24th structural phase, dated as circa 515 A.D., the excavator has dated these two periods as circa 1165-885 B. C. and 885-605 B. C. In addition to decadent painted

1. D. P. Agrawal and Sheila Kusunigar, MMR, p. 76.

grey ware, Period II showed red and black-and-red ware and iron. The Period III circa 605-45 B. C. is marked by the introduction of N. B. P Ware, some of it painted, showing the influence of the P G. Ware on it. The other pottery, grey ware, red ware and black-and-red ware also continued to be in use. The next Period IV circa 45 B. C. - 580 A.D. is marked by the total absence of N. B. P. pottery.<sup>1</sup>

Excavations at Ahicchatra, the capital of North Panchala, was carried out systematically by the Archaeological Survey of India in 1940-44 under the direction of K. N. Dikshit and A. Ghosh. It was here that a beginning was made for the classification of pottery of historical times. On the basis of a systematic study of the pottery, the excavator was able to distinguish between nine structural phases ranging from prior to 300 B. C. to 1100 A. D. The earliest pottery found at this place was the P. G. Ware, which lay below the N. B. P Ware. It was dated by the excavator prior to 300 B. C., but now the date of this ware has been assigned to about the beginning of the first millennium B. C. At this level no structures were found, but period II, circa 300 - 200 B. C. revealed mud-brick buildings, the N. B. P. Ware and uninscribed copper-cast coins. Mud-brick houses continued in Period III ( from circa 200 - 100 B. C. ). The next Period IV ( 100 B. C. - 100 A. D. ) was marked by the first kiln-burnt brick structures and the presence of Panchala coins. The succeeding periods do not concern our study.<sup>2</sup>

As regards the towns associated with Krishna, namely Mathura and Dyaraka, a small-scale excavation carried out at Mathura ( 1954-55 )<sup>3</sup> revealed that the first occupants of this ancient site used hand-made pottery. Over this was found an assemblage of plain grey ware and black ware typical of the pre- N. B. P. period. The second period, consisting of three sub-

1. A. Ghosh, ARMM, pp. 53-54.

2. Ibid., pp. 50-51.

3. IAR, 1954-55, pp. 15-16.

periods, was characterised by the use of the N. B. P Ware. The middle sub-period furnished a large variety of antiquities like grey terracotta figurines of the mother goddesses with applied girdles, beads, square coins, while the last sub-period saw vigorous building activity in baked bricks. This vigorous building activity continued unabated until the second century B. C., when the town was deserted for a short period. The town regained its importance under the Kushana kings and the last two periods contained Kushana and Gupta antiquities and early and late Gupta coins. H. D. Sankalia carried out an excavation at Dvaraka mainly to test the truth of the traditional account of the submergence of the city in ancient times. The excavations confirmed the submergence of Dvaraka in about the second century B. C.<sup>1</sup>

Eleven C-14 dates are now available from the P. G. Ware levels from Noh in Rajasthan and Hastinapura and Atranjikhera in U. P.<sup>2</sup> These seem to support within a margin of hundred years, the dates fixed for this ware by Lal and other excavators by the statigraphic method. The Hastinapura samples, however, did not give dates earlier than 570-125 years, but it was subsequently found that they were damaged by rootlets. When dates were obtained from samples of post-P. G. W. levels and compared with contemporary levels elsewhere, they were found to be younger by about 200 years. On this basis the comparable C-14 dates of the Hastinapura samples would give a period of 700-535 B. C. with a margin of 100 years on both sides for the P. G. Ware culture. The four samples from Noh gave this period as 820-490 B. C. with an error as high as 225 for the earlier value. In Atranjikhera this period was 1025-535 B. C., with an error of 100 years on both sides. As we are mainly concerned with the period during which the P. G. W. culture flourished, we cannot reject any C-14 date on the ground that it does not fit in with other consistent dates. Taking into account all the C-14 dates, we can state with confidence that the P. G. W. culture

was prevalent during the period 1025-490 B. C. with a margin of 100 years on both sides.

It is now admitted by all that the C-14 dates fall short of those based on the tree-ring dating method known as dendrochronology. Scientists working in a Museum Laboratory in the United States have worked out the corrections to be made to the C-14 dates ( MASCA ). According to their corrections, the early phase of the P. G. W. level of Noh will be 900-100 B. C., while that of Atranjikhera will be 1155-100 B. C. It may be noted that the validity of the MASCA corrections have not been accepted by all scientists, and experiments are still going on in this field. However, the corrections are not likely to be large at the levels of 1000 B. C. or below.

On the basis of the excavations carried out so far in the upper Ganga basin, we can tentatively arrive at the following conclusions about the different cultures found at the site of these excavations. The O. C. Ware was found at the lowest level only in Hastinapur and Atranjikhera; other sites at which this ware was found do not figure in the Vedic or Epic literature. Y. D. Sharma and other experts now believe that the O. C. Ware found at these places is only a degenerated late Harappan pottery, which had become discoloured due to weathering and waterlogging. Among these sites, Bisauli and Rajapur Parsu in U. P. have revealed copper objects at the O. C. ware levels. Later, excavations at Bahadarabad in U. P. have also yielded typical copper hoard objects like the hooked spear and the shouldered celt in association with the O. C. pottery. The copper hoards found in the Ganga basin would appear to be the relics of the late Harappan culture. Earlier excavations had revealed a gap between the late Harappan and the P. G. W. assemblages, but recent work at Bhawanpura, Dadheri and few other sites has led to the possibility of continuity between the Harappan tradition and the P. G. W. period ( Joshi 1978 ).<sup>1</sup> It has been noticed for the first

1. IAR, 1962-63, pp. 1-20

2. S. P. Sengupta. MMR, pp. 44-45.

1. Harappan Civilization, Edited by Gregory Possehl, New Delhi, 1983, Jagadpati and Madhubala, pp. 191-96.

time that a few Harappan shapes of pottery were copied in the grey ware. The overlap between the late Harappan and the P. G. Ware cultures is datable to 1500 B. C. to 1000 B. C.<sup>1</sup>

Contrasted with this copper culture of the O. C. ware people, the P. G. Ware people represent an iron culture in which they used iron weapons also for war and chase. Iron finds at Ahar ( near Udaipur ) clearly show that the beginning of iron age in India goes back to the middle of the second millennium B. C. The iron finds at Eran are also dated by the C-14 method to the 12th or 13th century B. C. If these dates are corrected by dendrochronology, they will be pushed back by a few centuries. These discoveries clearly refute the view of Sir Mortimer Wheeler who had suggested that iron was brought into India by the Archaemenid Persians in the sixth century B. C. What is pertinent, however, is not when iron was discovered in India, but when the iron technology was sufficiently developed to make iron weapons. Earlier only copper and bronze were known to occur with the P. G. Ware, but at Atranjikhera iron arrowheads and spearheads have been found throughout the deposit yielding P. G. Ware. The distribution of the P. G. Ware over a vast stretch of territory covering northern and eastern Rajasthan, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and a part of Madhya Pradesh would suggest that this vast region formed a homogeneous culture. Most of the important sites excavated in this region are associated with the Mbh. story or tradition.

The culture of the P. G. Ware people is described by Lal in two articles in *Ancient India*<sup>2</sup> and the Annals of the BORI ( 1974 ).<sup>3</sup> He says that because of the limited nature of excavations at all sites very little is known about these people. They seem to have lived in houses with mud or mud-brick walls

and walls made of reeds plastered with mud mixed with rice-husk. No baked bricks were found to be in use. The common forms of pottery in use consisted of bowls and dishes with straight or convex side and round and sagger base. The pots had designs, usually black in pigment, but sometimes in chocolate or reddish brown. Wheat and rice formed their staple food, supplemented by the meat of humped cattle, buffalo, sheep, pigs etc., which were slaughtered for that purpose. Among the domesticated animals special mention must be made of the horse, which is conspicuously absent at the Harappan sites. These people were also fond of hunting deer and relished venison. Though a plant study has shown the presence of cultivated wheat, rice, barley and pulses during this period, it is surprising that no agricultural implements were found at the P.G.W. levels. Among other finds are bangles of glass, marbles, pottery discs, a gamesman and a die. The younger folk seem to have played with the marbles and the pottery discs, while the elder people probably indulged in gambling. A die discovered from Alamgir is of an elongated variety with only four faces, bearing the marks one and three on one side of opposite faces and two and four on the other side. The limited variety of ceramics such as dishes and straight-sided bowls and the absence of agricultural implements suggest a kind of rural economy, in which people depended for their living on farming ( without the use of plough ), livestock and hunting.

Subsequent excavations e. g. at Atranjikhera ( Gaur and Hassan, 1968-69 ) have shown that the flood gap at Hastinapura was a purely local phenomenon and that there was a gradual evolution of the N. B. P culture from the P.G.W. culture. The N. B. P ware is found abundantly in U. P. and Bihar, and the region near Rajgir, Pataliputra, Rajghat and Kaushambi can be considered to be the home of this ware, with the contiguous parts of M. P., Punjab and Rajasthan as the peripheral regions coming under its influence. During this period towns were fortified, as evidenced by mud-brick bastions. Houses were built of mud-

1. Ibid., M. Rafique Mughal, Recent Archaeological Research in Choitstan Desert. p. 93.

2. B. B. Lal, Excavations at Atranjikhera, Dist. Etah, Ancient India, 1954-55, pp. 11-15.

3. B. B. Lal, Archaeology and the two Indian Epics, ABORI, Vol. LIV, 1974, p. 1.

bricks as well as burnt bricks. Sokage-jars and brick drains were used for letting out water, while terrecotta ring wells may have been used both as wells and as drainage pits. The iron technology was sufficiently developed to manufacture agricultural implements such as the sickle, the ploughshare, hoe etc. From this it can be surmised that improved agriculture formed the backbone of their economy, supplemented by cattlebreeding. This period witnessed another improvement, namely the introduction of coinage as the medium of exchange, indicative of brisk trading and commercial activity. Punchmarked coins of copper and silver, well-executed animals and human figurines cast in a mould, beads of carnelian, agate and glass, bangles and rings of copper, chalcedony and horn were some of the other finds in the excavations of this period.

The same cultural complex continued in the next period IV ( 200 B. C. - 100 A. D. ). In this period the coarse grey ware of the N. B. P period was replaced by red ware pottery, which was all wheel-turned and had generally a medium grained fabric. A remarkable feature of this pottery was the use of stamped and incised decorations. There was an intense building activity with the use of baked bricks, which revealed thickly populated townships. This period showed a variety of finds like the coins of Mathura rulers, Shunga terrecottas, inscribed potsherds etc.<sup>1</sup>

Summing up, we find that the excavations carried out so far in the sites connected with the Bharata war by B. B. Lal, G. R. Sharma, K. N. Dikshit and A. Ghosh go to prove that there is a historical basis for the Bharata war. Though the archaeological evidence cannot pinpoint the date of the Bharata war, it does indicate the time-bracket 1100-600 B. C. during which it could have taken place. One cannot ignore this scientific evidence based on carefully planned archaeological excavations and push back the date of the war before 1100 B. C. or thereabouts. It was also found that the astronomical data in the

Vashampayana text is hardly sufficient to fix the time of the war. It is also plain that no conclusions can be drawn about the date of the war by combining it with the Greek synchronisms and the astronomical references made by later redactors. The traditional view does not bear scrutiny, as it is based on a late tradition. The historians have proceeded on the right lines, but have based their view about the date of the war on uncritical acceptance of certain puranic statements about the interval between the birth of Parikshit II and the Nanda king. We do not know for certain the date of Nanda's accession to the Magadha throne, but we know definitely from the evidence of Buddhist literature that Udayana and Pransenajit were contemporaries of Buddha. We shall, therefore, examine critically the evidence contained in the puranas as regards the number of kings who ruled between Yudhishthira and Udayana and form an estimate of the average period of their rule. The product of these two numbers will give us the interval between Yudhishthira and Udayana and enable us to fix the time of the war within a small margin of error.

1. Ancient India, No. 9, 1953, 94-97.

## Adhyaya - 7

## THE DATE OF BHARATA WAR

Illustration  
Archaeological Institute of India  
Museum and Library  
Delhi  
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In the last adhyaya, we saw that the archaeological evidence can give us an idea of the material culture associated with a particular period. In order to determine the date of the Bharata war, Lal had also to depend on the genealogical lists of rulers and the computations of their average reign period. The only evidence which can enable us to fix the time of any historical event consists of astronomical observations, inscriptions and coins which pertain to the time or period of the occurrence of that event. An astronomical observation made at the time of a historical event is of inestimable value for the determination of its date. As the puranas were composed centuries after the Bharata war, the astronomical references found in them relating to the date of the Bharata war are of doubtful value. We have also to bear in mind that the same argument would apply with equal force to the astronomical references contained in the later redactions of the epic. The astronomical references which are relevant to the determination of the Bharata war are only those which find a mention in the Vaishampayana text.

Before we proceed to consider the astronomical references in the epic, we shall first deal with the views of ancient Indian astronomers. Aryabhata ( 499 A. D. ) was the first Indian

astronomer to state that the Bharata war synchronised with the start of the Kali era i.e. in 3101 B. C.<sup>1</sup> It is, however, not very clear whether he had based this view on mere tradition or had arrived at it on astronomical calculations. This tradition, however, as pointed out by Fleet, was not founded in the Vedic times, and as we shall show later, finds a mention only at a late stage in the epic.<sup>2</sup>

Varahamihira, another noted astronomer, while subscribing to the view that the Kali era began in 3101 B. C. fixed the date of the Bharata war 653 years after the start of the Kali era. As the successor he must have been aware of Aryabhata's view, but he gives no indication of it. He records this view in a famous passage of his Brihatsamhita.<sup>3</sup> Kalhana also in the Rajatarangini<sup>4</sup>, following Varahamihira, states that the war occurred 653 years after the commencement of the Kali era. It is clear from the above passage that Varahamihira believed that the Saptarshis have a real motion, that they move through the asterisms, dwelling in each asterism for 100 years and that they were in Magha at the time of Yudhisthira. Here according to his commentator Bhattotpala, he was following an earlier astronomer Vriddhagarga. Now we find a mention of this Vriddhagarga in the Gadaparva ( IX.36.15 ) added by Harivamshakara, where it is said that he had gained through austerities the knowledge of the motion of heavenly bodies. These two beliefs seem to have found their way into the puranas either from Vriddhagarga's work ( not extant now ) or from Varahamihira's Brihatsamhita. It may be noted that Varahamihira himself does not refer to this subject either in his Panchasiddhantika or Brihajjataka, his two most celebrated works. Further eminent astronomers and mathematicians like Aryabhata, Brahmagupta and Bhaskaracarya also do not mention this subject.

1. Aryabhatiyam, Desagitiika, I.5, Kalakriya, II.10.
2. JRAS, 1911, pp. 179 ff, quoted by Raichaudhary, PHAI, p. 27.
3. Saptarshi Chara, 3, 4.
4. Rajatarangini, 1.51.

As against this view of Varahamihira modern astronomers assert that the Saptarshis have no motion. S. B. Dikshit, an eminent scholar of the last century, says in this regard, "But the stars have no motion and hence the time calculated on this assumption has no meaning and so also the time given by Garga and Varahamihira is meaningless." Dikshit explains the source of this error by saying that this big constellation occupies an extensive region of the sky and so the stars could be said to be on a meridian passing through any of the constellations, Magha to Citra.<sup>1</sup>

Prof. D. G. Dhavale of Pune gives a plausible explanation as to how given the premises of Vridhagarga, Varahamihira calculated the time of Yudhisthira correct to a year, by the astronomical method. Since the Saptarshis cover a large part of the sky, it is necessary to specify the asterism in which they can be taken to be posited. For this purpose Dhavale has taken as the criterion the explanation given by Utpala in his commentary on the second line of Saptarshichara, verse 4 given above, namely that they are in that asterism which rises ( in the east ) after they are fully visible. Now there is a formula available in spherical astronomy to calculate the latitude at which two given stars rise simultaneously on the horizon, if the right ascension and declination of each are known. Applying this formula to Ursae Majoris ( i. e. Marici of the Saptarshis ) which is the last to rise and to each of Spica ( Chitra ), Corvus ( Hasta ) and Denebola ( Uttara ), he found that Ursae Majoris would rise simultaneously with Chitra at latitude  $4^{\circ} 12'$ , with Hasta at latitude  $13^{\circ} 36'$  and with Uttara at  $27^{\circ} 40'$ . In other words Chitra will rise after the Munis at latitudes between  $4^{\circ} 12'$  and  $13^{\circ} 36'$ , Hasta at latitudes between  $13^{\circ} 36'$  and  $27^{\circ} 40'$  and Uttara at latitudes higher than  $27^{\circ} 40'$ . The fact that Hasta is the asterism which rises just after the Saptarshis are fully visible at latitude  $23^{\circ}$  of Ujjain to which Varahamihira belonged was

1. S. B. Dikshit, *History of Indian Astronomy*, translated by R. V. Vaidya, Calcutta, 1969, p. 119.

verified further by Prof. Dhavale by using the Planetarium of the New English School at Tilak Road, Pune. When the instrument was set to a latitude of  $23^{\circ}$ , the rotation of the instrument showed that Corvus is the constellation that rises after Marichi, Uttara being already up. Now as the Munis were thought to be in Magha at the time of Yudhisthira, they would have completed one full revolution through all the 27 asterisms and covered three more by Varahamihira's time; giving one hundred years to each asterism, this would make a total period of 3000 years from Yudhisthira to Varahamihira. But as Varahamihira gives the time of Yudhisthira as 2526 years before the Shaka era, the Shaka era at that time must have been  $3000 - 2526 = 474$ , giving incidentally the time of Varahamihira.<sup>1</sup> However, it will be found that Hasta will always rise at Ujjain after the Saptarshis become fully visible, thus confirming that the Saptarshis have no motion.

On the basis of the astronomical passages in the Mbh., different scholars have calculated different dates for the Mbh. war : S. D. Sharma-1197 B. C.; Colebrook- 1326 B. C.; Dr. R. P. Poddar-1422 B. C.; S. B. Roy-1486 B. C.; Prof. V. Raghavan 3067 B. C.; B. B. Raman - 3139 B. C.; M. Ramayya -3139 B. C. etc.<sup>2</sup> As the dates derived from mathematical calculations are widely different, it is obvious that there is something seriously wrong with the data on which they are based or the methods used. Among the redactors of Mbh. only Vaishampayana, instructed by Vyasa, would have been in a position to describe the correct planetary positions at the time of the war. The only reference made by Vaishampayana to the position of the stars at the start of the war is in Udyoga. 148.3, in which Duryodhana is said to have ordered his army to march to Kurukshetra in the Pushya nakshatra. It does not seem possible to fix the date of the Mbh. war on the basis of the astronomical passages contained in the Vaishampayana text. Of the astronomical

1. D. G. Dhavale, "The Date of Varahamihira" ABORI, XLVIII - XLIX, ( Golden Jubilee Volume ), 1968, pp. 347-352.  
2. ABW, p. 48, footnote II; MMR, p. 84.

passages relied upon by the scholars, Sauti has added the following :

( i ) Udyoga, 140.18 : in this Krishna asks Karna to start the war or be ready for it seven days hence in Amavasya at Antares and

( ii ) Anushasana, 153.27,28 : in this Bhishma says, " I have lain on the bed of arrows for 58 days and the auspicious month of Magha has come. This deserves to be regarded as the bright fortnight, since three parts of it ( i.e. the dark fortnight ) still remain."

The famous statement of Balarama ( Shalya. 33. 5 ) that he had started in the Pushya nakshatra and returned after 42 days in Shravana nakshatra has been added by the Harivamshakara. After examining the astronomical passages of the Mbh. Dr. P V Kane stated, " As I hold that either the Mahabharata passages on the position of the planets were interpolated at a late stage or are hopelessly inconsistent, I deem it unnecessary to enter upon an examination of the mathematical calculations made by several scholars to find out the date of the Bharata war from the shifting of the solstices and the position of the planets. "<sup>1</sup> The reason why the astronomical passages in Mbh. are hopelessly inconsistent is that they have been interpolated by the Mbh. redactors from time to time without regard to their consistency or for different purposes.

Sauti has added a medley of planetary positions prior to the commencement of the war as also during the war. He has done this with a definite purpose, namely to indicate that there were many bad portents foreshadowing wholesale destruction of human life. Thus when Lord Krishna, after his unfruitful peace mission, met Karna to win him over to the side of the Pandavas, Karna said to him, " I see many dreadful visions, O Krishna, as

1. History of Dharmashastra, Vol. III, p. 923.

also terrible portents and fierce disturbances. All these portents indicate the defeat of Duryodhana and the triumph of Yudhisthira. That brilliant and fierce planet Saturn is afflicting Rohini in order to destroy the creatures of the earth. The planet Mars, turning towards Jyeshta, approaches Anuradha, foreboding ill for our friends. Without doubt a terrible calamity will befall the Kurus, especially since the planet afflicts the star Chitra. The moon's spot has changed its position and Rahu is approaching the sun. Meteors are falling from the sky with loud noise and terrific motion."<sup>1</sup> It is odd that after making this forecast Karna did not warn Duryodhana about it and make an effort to stop the war.

In the second adhyaya of the Bhishmaparva, Vyasa also addresses Dhritarashtra as follows : " Great will be the slaughter, O monarch, in this battle. I see many frightful omens." He then goes on to describe the planetary positions as follows : " The moon looks lack-lustre and faint even on the full moon night of the kartika month or of firey colour in a sky of similar hue. The quarters seem ablaze in the twilight and rain showers dust and flesh. Even the celebrated star Arundhati, esteemed by the good men, has kept Vasista at her back. Saturn appears to be afflicting Rohini and the deer-sign of the moon has deviated from its usual position, indicative of frightful situation. Even though the sky is cloudless, the noise of thunder is heard. " In adhyaya III ( 24-28 ) of the same parva, Vyasa gives elaborate descriptions of planetary positions among the various asterisms and says that all this forebodes the destruction of the Kurus. The last stanza and the previous context according to Dikshit show that a lunar eclipse had taken place on the kartika full moon day, followed by a solar eclipse on the next new moon day. The falling of two eclipses in the same month is a common experience, but these two are rarely seen at the same place; and that is why it is regarded as a bad omen. He further observes that the occurrence of

1. Udyoga, 141.7 - 10.

a half month consisting of 13 days is a rarity and that too is a bad omen.<sup>1</sup> As Swami Kannu Pillai observes most of the statements found in the Epic are really reckless astrological statements made without due regard to astronomical possibilities.<sup>2</sup>

As regards epigraphic and numismatic evidence, no inscriptions or coins are available which belong to the period of the war. Now an inscription is of unquestionable validity in respect of the contemporary event recorded in it. But what credence can be given to an ancient event recorded in it, which cannot be within the knowledge of the inscriber or of his patron for whom the inscription was made? For instance, the whole inscription of Pulakeshin II dated shaka 556 states that 3735 years had elapsed since the Bharata war. This inscription is only valid evidence that it was made during the year 634 A. D. during the reign of Pulakeshi II. We cannot say the same about the date of the Bharata war recorded in it. It is probable that in recording this date the inscriber was merely following the Aryabhata tradition. This tradition had soon become an article of faith with the Hindus. The Kali era was regularly entered in all the Panchangas (Hindu almanacs) and had also come to be used and recited at the time of sacred rites, marriages etc. As a result of this, an equivalence soon came to be established between the Kali era and the local eras. It is very likely that the author of the Aihole inscription was merely going by this equivalence between the Kali era and the Shaka era. Likewise when the Mahomedan historian Alberuni equates the 400th year of the Yadhagird, the guage system with the 953rd year of the Shaka era, 1088th year of the Vikrama era and the 4132nd year of the Kali era, he was merely referring to the equivalence already established among these eras. All such evidence, however voluminous, cannot be taken as independent proof of the date of the Bharata war.

1. Dikshit, op. Cit. p. 114.

2. Quoted in Prof. Raghavan's *The Date of the Mahabharata War*. p. 36.

These arguments also apply mutatis mutandis to the Hisse-Borale inscription of the Vakataka king Devasena of the 5th century A. D. This inscription records the date of the construction of the Sudarshana lake near Washim in the Akola district in Maharashtra. However, the evidence about the date of the Bharata war is not direct, but connected with the supposed motion of the Saptarshis.<sup>3</sup> According to Dr. Koltey, this inscription reads as follows : 'in the year 380 when the seven sages were in Uttara and had traversed its one-sixth portion.' Now it has already been pointed out that the Saptarshis have no motion (p.139) and any conclusion based on this supposition is not right. But we have to explain how the observer saw that the Saptarshis were in the asterism Uttara. As the latitude of Washim is near about  $20^{\circ} 30'$ , the position of the stars is likely to be the same as at Ujjain (latitude  $23^{\circ}$ ) and we should expect to find U. M. (Marici) and Corvus (Hasta) to rise at the same time. When Prof. Dhavale had verified this by visual observation with the aid of the Planetarium of the New English School, Pune, he had found that the asterism Uttara was already up. It is, therefore, probable that when the inscriber found Uttara rising at the horizon, he might have concluded that the Saptarshis were in Uttara without verifying that all the seven stars had arisen.

The Mbh. scholars who have dealt with the date of the Bharata war may be broadly divided into three groups (i) the archaeologists, (ii) the indologists and historians, and (iii) the traditionalists. As the P. G. Ware, as stated earlier, was discovered at the lowest levels (second lowest levels in the case of Hastinapura and Atranjikheda) at most of the sites associated with the Mbh. story B. B. Lal identified the P. G. Ware culture with the earliest Mbh. culture. Amarendra Nath<sup>1</sup> of the National Museum, Delhi, has, however, raised the question as to why the post-Harappan/O. C. P. culture should not be identified with the

1. MMR., pp. 161-163.

Mbh. culture as the remains of the former have been found in plenty in the Indo-Gangetic divide, which forms the actual locale of the Mbh. story. Lal does not rightly concede this on the ground that among the Mbh. sites the O. C. P culture has been found only at Hastinapura and Atanjikhera and the post-Harappan remains at Kurukshetra only. But the most serious objection to this suggestion is that the post-Harappan / O. C. P culture was essentially a copper culture, while the Bharata war was fought with iron weapons. Now according to C-14 method of dating, the P. G. W. culture is broadly assigned to c. 1000-500 B. C. If these dates are corrected according to the table published by the Applied Science Centre for Archaeology, University of Pennsylvania, U. S. A., the P. G. Ware culture in the Upper Ganga-Yamuna valley would be ascribable broadly to c. 1100-600 B. C. As the pre-historic methods of fighting with stones, branches, clubs, hands and fists were still current at the time of the Bharata war, its date will have to be placed in the beginning of this time bracket. This identification of the earliest Mbh. culture with the P. G. Ware culture is an important datum in determining the date of the Bharata war and cannot be brushed aside lightly.

The historical school places the time of the Bharata war round about 1400 B. C. This view hinges upon the Greek synchronism which connects the coronation of Chandragupta Maurya with the departure of the Macedonian king Alexander and the interval as given in the puranas between the birth of Parikshit II and the coronation of the Nanda king. Attention was first drawn to this synchronism by Sir William Jones in 1793. Greek writers Plutarch and Justin mention that an Indian prince named Sandrocottos met Alexander when he was in Takshashila in the year 326 B. C. Alexander departed from India in 325 B. C. and breathed his last in the year 323 B. C. After the death of the Macedonian invader, his Indian dominions rose in revolt under Sandrocottos as their leader. Sandrocottos, after defeating and putting to death his

governors, installed himself on the throne of Palibothra and established a vast empire in northern India. On the basis of phonetic similarity between Sandrocottos and Candragupta and Palibothra and Pataliputra, the historians have identified Sandrocottos as Candragupta Maurya and fixed his year of accession to the throne of Pataliputra as 323 B. C. On this basis, they have determined the chronology of his successors and the king who ruled before him.

This synchronism finds further support in Ashoka's Rock Edict XIII, which speaks of five Yona or Hellenistic kings, Antiyoka, Turamaya, Maka, Antakin and Alikasudra. History records that after Alexander left, the empire established by him did not last long and was divided into small independent kingdoms governed by kings of Greek origin. The Yona kings mentioned in Ashoka's Edict have been identified with Antiochos II Theos of Seria ( 261-246 B. C. ), Ptolemy II Philadelphos of Egypt ( 285-247 B. C. ), Magas of Cyrene ( who died not later than 258 B. C. ), Antigonos of Macedonia ( 278-239 B. C. ) and Alexander of Epirus ( 272-255 B. C. ) or of Corinth ( 252-244 B. C. ).<sup>1</sup> As the Puranic records state that Chandragupta ruled for 24 years, his son Bimbisara for 25 years and Ashoka for 36 years, Ashoka's reign may be safely placed between 274-238 B. C. Dr. Vincent Smith, however, observes that 'the fact that his formal consecration of coronation ( abhisheka ) was delayed for some four years until 269 B. C. confirms the tradition that his succession was contested and it may be true that his rival was an elder brother named Sushima.<sup>2</sup> Now according to Simhalese chronicles, Ashoka's coronation took place 218 years after Buddha's nirvana. This brings the date of Buddha's nirvana to 487 B. C. which is supported by a Cantonese tradition of 489 A. D. based on a dotted record brought to China by Singhabhadra.<sup>3</sup>

1. Raichaudhury, PHAI, p. 208.

2. The Oxford History of India, Third Edition, 1958, p. 117.

3. PHAI, p. 225.

The Buddhist scholars, however, are not all agreed about the date of Buddha's nirvana. Rhys Davids, Jayaswal and others take it to be 544 B. C. based on a Ceylonese reckoning. The account in the Chinese annals of an embassy sent by Mahanama king of Ceylon, to the Chinese emperor in 428 A. D. seems to support their view. K. C. Varma has quoted epigraphic evidence in support of this view. A Ceylonese inscription was found by Rev. Pandit T. Shri Dipananda Thera, and it has been edited by S. Paramavita. The inscription does not mention its date, which has been calculated at 398 A. D. on the basis of the statements made in it. It is stated therein that Buddha's nirvana had occurred 941 years before. We do not know on what basis this difference between the two dates was worked out and it is probable that the inscriber had calculated this difference by taking the date of Buddha's nirvana as 544 B. C. Secondly P. C. Sengupta states that the Samyutta Nikaya mentions that a solar eclipse and a lunar eclipse had taken place some time before Buddha's death and were seen at Shravasti. On this basis he has calculated that these two eclipses could have taken place in 560 B. C. From this he argues that the true date of Buddha's nirvana is more likely to be 544 B. C. which is nearer to it than 487 B. C. Even if we grant that the two eclipses had taken place and seen at Shravasti, and that its date has been correctly calculated by Senagupta, the planetary positions repeat themselves according to the Metonic cycle every nineteen years,<sup>1</sup> and so the two eclipses might have taken place in 541 B. C., 522 B. C., 503 B. C. and 484 B. C., the last of which is only three years after the later date 487 B. C. of Buddha's nirvana. This astronomical evidence, is therefore, not in favour of the earlier date 544 B. C.

Moreover the date 487 B. C. for Buddha's nirvana is consistent with the internal evidence in the Mbh. Prasenajita, as we saw before, was the patron of Suta, and he was of the same age and died almost in the same year as Buddha. Suta must have died some time before Sauti met Shaunaka at the convention of

1. My thanks are due to Prof. D. G. Dhavale for suggesting this argument.

the hermits in the Naimisha forest; for Shaunaka tells him that he used to hear wonderful stories from his father ( Adi. 5.2 ). As Sauti lived in 450 B. C. Suta could not have been a contemporary of Prasenajita, if the latter had died in 544 B. C. In view of this, the date 487 B. C. seems to be more likely than the other date 544 B. C. for the death of Buddha.

After fixing the date of Chandragupta Maurya as 323 B. C., the historians place the beginning of the Nanda dynasty in 413 B. C. Then they proceed to fix the date of the Bharata war as follows : The Puranas mention that the interval between the birth of Parikshit, grandson of Arjuna, and the coronation of Nanda was 1015, 1050 or 1500 years. They reject the last figure on the ground that it would make the average reign period of 22 Barhadata kings and 12 Shishunagas to 45 years or if we include the Pradyota kings to about 40 years. By taking the interval as 1015 or 1050, they calculate the date of the war as 1428 or 1463 B. C. Here the question arises that if one of the three figures is held to be doubtful, why the other two figures should be considered trustworthy. We shall revert to this later.

As against the above two views held by the archaeologists and the historians, the traditionalists hold that the Bharata war took place at the beginning of the Kali era i.e. around 3101 B. C. If this had been an ancient tradition originating from the time of Vaishampayana, it would have been entitled to great respect, but it appears to be of late origin. Vaishampayana, it is true, mentions yuganta, but he applies that term to the final dissolution of the world due to a Great Flood or a Great Fire. The references to the commencement of the Kaliyuga in the Aranyaka 148.37 and Shalya 59.21 have been added later by Harivamshakara and the one in Adi 2.9 by the author of Parvasangraha. In the Aranyaka 148.37 Harivamshakara states :

*etat kaliyugam nama acirad yat pravartate ।*

Here the use of the present tense indicates that the Kaliyuga

will begin in the near future, but it does not mention that the war will also start at that time. This he specifically mentions in Shalya 59.21.

*praptam kaliyugam viddhi pratijnam pandavasya ca |*

By saying this Lord Krishna is trying to pacify his brother Balarama, who was furious at the foul attack made by Bhima on Duryodhana. The author of the Parvasangraha says in Adi. 2.9

*antare cai va samprate kalidvaparayor abhut |  
samantapancake yuddham kurupandavasenayoh ||*

However, we are told by the Vishnu Purana<sup>1</sup> that the Kali could not have entered the earth so long as Krishna was alive and so the Kali era started only after his death i.e. 36 years after the war.

In historical times, it was the astronomer Aryabhata who subscribed to the tradition that the Bharata war began with the start of the Kali era and worked out its date as 3101 B.C., but we do not know how he arrived at this date. Kalhana mentions this tradition in his Rajatarangini<sup>2</sup> (12th century A.D.), showing that it was prevalent in his days. But he goes on to say that people are misled by this tradition and miscalculated the time of the war, which took place 653 years after the beginning of the Kali era. Kalhana states this view on the authority of the Brihatsamhita of Varahamihira and adds that he got his knowledge of the motion of the Saptarshis from Vridhhagarga. These different views held from time to time, especially by two noted ancient astronomers would seem to throw doubt on the antiquity and the universal adoption of this tradition, until late times.

Acharya Udaya Veer Shastri<sup>3</sup> has made an attempt to

reconcile the discrepancy between the view of Aryabhata and Varahamihira in the following manner. He argues that it was Vridhhagarga who had given 2526 years as the interval between Yudhisthira and the Shaka era. Since he lived before the start of the Vikrama or Shaka era, his era must have been different from the one in current use in Varahamihira's time. Acharya has therefore, suggested that the Shaka era referred to by Vridhhagarga may have been started with the coronation of Cyrus of the Haxhamani dynasty of Iran, the mid-eastern part of which was called Shakastan and later known as Seistan. He finally concludes that if his accession to the throne be taken as 575 B.C., then the interval between his and Yudhisthira's time would be 2526 years, which perfectly fits in with the traditional view. This argument seems unconvincing for the following reasons : Firstly, there is no evidence to show that it was Vridhhagarga who had calculated this interval. It seems more likely, as stated before ( p.139 ) that Varahmihira uncritically accepted Vridhhagarga's theory of the motion of Saptarshis and calculated the interval by the astronomical method. Secondly, it has not been substantiated that an era had been started in Iran with Cyrus's accession to the throne and that it was known as the Shaka era. And lastly it passes our understanding as to why, if Vridhhagarga was the originator of this view, he came to quote the Iranian Shaka era rather than a local era. Acharya, in answer to this possible objection, says that Vridhhagarga might have been a resident of Iran, but adduces no evidence in support of this statement.

The dates around 3101 B.C. for the Bharata war are also inadmissible, being at variance with the Greek synchronisms. The traditionalists, however, explain the first Greek synchronism between Sandrocottos and Alexander, by equating Sandrocottos with Samudragupta or at the most with Chandragupta of the Gupta dynasty. There is sufficient

1. Geeta Press, pp. 355-56.

2. Rajatarangini, I.51.

3. ABW, Delhi, 1979, pp. 50-52.

epigraphic evidence to disprove this identity. The date fixed by Dr. Fleet, namely 319-321 A. D. for Chandragupta Gupta is supported by the Mandsor inscription of Kumaragupta II, Buddhagupta inscription of Gupta year 165 and the Veraval inscription as also by ten more Gupta inscriptions.<sup>1</sup>

Further this equation between Sandrocottos and Chandragupta Gupta would push back the dates of Buddha, Chandragupta Maurya and Ashoka by over six hundred years. This would clash against the second Greek synchronism arising from the Rock Edict XIII of Ashoka. This is, however, sought to be explained by the argument that the Edict refers to kingdoms and not kings, as the words Chola, Pandya and Tamraparniya which follow immediately refer to countries or tribes. Here in the original text of the Shahbajagadhi shila,<sup>2</sup> the word rajani is taken to be the Pali equivalent of Sk. rajyani and not rajano. But the words Chola, Panda and Tamraparniya could very well denote the Chola king, the Pandya king and the king of Shri Lanka. Further the Girnar Rock Edict XIII clearly mentions them as rajano as follows :

*yonarajaparam ca tena catvaro rajano turamayo ca antekina  
ca maga ca*

This synchronism with the Hellenistic kings leaves no doubt that Ashoka ruled in the middle of the third century B. C. In any case his date cannot be pushed back before the 4th century B. C. in view of his Kandahara inscription written in Greek. There occur in this inscription the Greek letters ' heta ' ' xi ' ' psi ' ' omega '. These were incorporated in the Greek alphabet in 402 B. C. In any case it is well known that the Greeks

1. Fleet, *Corpus inscriptionum Indicarum ( Gupta Inscriptions )*, Vol. III, p. 127.

Quoted by K. C. Verma in ABW, p. 125.

2. Dr. Rajabali Pandey, *Asoka Ke Silalekha*, Varanasi, 1967, pp. 58, 18.

borrowed their alphabet from the Phoenicians in the 8th century B. C.<sup>1</sup>

Nor is it possible to push back the date of Buddha's nirvana earlier than 6th century B. C. One of the most important discoveries at Kaushambi is that of the Ghositarama monastery. It was specially built for Buddha according to the Buddhist tradition by a merchant named Ghosita. This monastery at which Buddha gave many sermons, is described in detail by Hieun Tsang. The identification of the ruins of the monastery was facilitated by the find of an inscribed record assignable to the Kushana period. The monastic site was continually occupied from c. 6th century B. C. to the 6th century A. D. through sixteen successive phases of building activity.<sup>2</sup> This is the period during which the sixteen Mahajanapadas mentioned in Anguttara Nikaya ( see p. 131 ) were established in North India, representing an urban culture. This urban culture could have come into existence after the Mohenjodaro civilization only at the close of the P. G. Ware culture and the start of the N. B. P Ware culture in about 600 B. C. Again at Kaushambi an extensive stone palace has been uncovered. The excavator believes that this may have been built by king Udayana, a contemporary of Buddha. At Rajagir, recently, the ramparts of the new Rajagriha, supposed to have been fortified by Ajatashatru against the possible attack by Chanda Pradyota, have been excavated. Here on a scanty deposit of N. B. P. Ware, found in association with red ware, lies a mud-rampart, over which a brick wall was added later in a period assigned to c. 500-200 B. C.<sup>3</sup> This evidence taken together shows that Buddha could not have lived before the 6th century B. C.

Summing up, we find that the archaeological evidence cannot pinpoint the date of the Bharata war, but can indicate the

1. K. C. Verma, ABW, p. 128.

2. M. N. Deshpande, *Historical Archaeology*, RIR, pp. 434-134.

3. A. Ghosh, ARMM, New Delhi, 1964, pp. 55-62.

time-bracket 1100-600 B. C. during which it could have taken place. One cannot ignore this scientific evidence based on carefully planned archaeological excavations and push back the date of the war before 1100 B. C. or thereabouts. It was also found that the astronomical data in the Vaishampayana text is hardly sufficient to fix the time of the war. It is also plain that no conclusions can be drawn about the date of the war by combining astronomical references made by later redactors. The traditional view does not bear scrutiny, as it is based on a late tradition and is irreconcilable with the Greek synchronisms. The historians have proceeded on the right lines, but have based their view about the date of the war on uncritical acceptance of certain puranic statements about the interval between the birth of Parikshita II and the Nanda king. We do not know for certain the date of Nanda's accession to the Magadha throne, but we know definitely from the evidence of Buddhist literature that Udayana and Prasenajit were contemporaries of Buddha.<sup>1</sup> We shall, therefore, examine critically the evidence contained in the puranas as regards the number of kings who ruled between Yudhisthira and Udayana as it will enable us to fix the time of the war within a small margin of error. This is the only method left, although not the best, which is available to us for determining the approximate period during which the war could have taken place.

Pargiter, who had studied the puranas with meticulous care, says that the Kaurava-Pandava dynasty of Hastinapura-Kaushambi consisted of 25 rulers from Parikshita to Udayana and that after Udayana there were four more kings until the line was exterminated by Nanda.<sup>2</sup> We do not know for certain the date of Nanda's accession, but we know from the Buddhist literature that Udayana was a contemporary of Buddha and could not have reigned for more than 10 to 15 years after

1. Law TAI, p. 137.

2. For the genealogy in full, C. Pargiter, DKA., pp. 65-6.

Buddha's demise. The puranas also state that until Mahapadma Nanda exterminated the kshatriyas, there reigned contemporaneously for the same length of time 24 Aikshvakus, 27 Panchalas, 24 Kashis, 28 Haihayas, 32 Kalingas, 25 Ashmakas, 36 Kurus, 28 Maithilis, 23 Shurasenas and 20 Vitihotras.<sup>1</sup> Since these numbers are given in the prophetic portion of the puranas, the starting point in their case is the reign of the Paurava king Adhishimakrishna, who was the fifth in descent from Parikshita II. This would mean that the Paurava-Kuru list should contain 25 future kings, while the contemporary list says 36. Pargiter explains this discrepancy by stating that another well-attested reading in the latter record says 26 and points out that because of the ease with which त्रि (thirty-) and द्वि (twenty-) might be confused, either may be read as the other data may indicate, irrespective of the weight of the MSS.<sup>2</sup> If we take into account the number of contemporary rulers in the other dynasties also except that of Kalinga, 26 kings between Parikshita-II and Udayana seem more probable than 36. This means that there were 27 kings between Parikshita II and Udayana ( both included ) and 25 kings between Janamejaya and Udayana.

Proceeding on the basis that Yudhisthira ruled for a period of thirty six years, there were 25 kings of the Kuru Paurava line starting with Parikshit II until Udayana, and that Udayana died about 475 B. C., we can apply a negative test to the various dates assigned to the Bharata war. The date 3101 B. C. ( or any earlier date ) would be impossible, as they could not have ruled on an average of over hundred years each. Likewise the interval 1500 years between the war and the accession of Mahapadma Nanda for 30 kings ( including Yudhisthira ) gives an average of 50 years each, which is also too high. Similarly the periods of 1050 and 1015 given in the puranas for the reigns of 30 kings gives an average of over 35 years as the average length of their reigns, which is also high for this country. It is likely that the pauranikas

1. Ibid, p. 181.

2. Pargiter, DKA, p. xxiii. 39.

calculated these periods by multiplying the number of Kuru Paurava kings ( 30 ) and the number of Aikshvaku kings ( 29 ) by 35, which was taken as the average period of their reigns. Pargiter has stated that of the 14 series of from 20 to 30 kings examined by him in various eastern and western countries, the longest average just exceeded 24 only in one case.<sup>1</sup> Vincent Smith estimated 25.2 years as the average length of reigns from Charles I to Queen Victoria covering a period of 252 years. This, Dr. Smith thought, was the maximum possible average duration of reign in ancient India.<sup>2</sup>

It is axiomatic that the dynasties that we select for working out the averages of their reigns must be similarly situated with the ancient dynasties both in respect of time and place. As pointed out by Romila Thapar, habits of nutrition may change over a period of a thousand years or more, and these, together with ecological changes, may affect longevity and average life-expectancy. Further instability of rule resulting from coups, usurpations and assassinations of ruling monarchs may lead to a rapid turn-over of the political rulers and shorten their reigns. *Prima facie* it does appear that these considerations were not borne in mind by Pargiter, Basham and Lal in working out their averages.

Pargiter fixed the date of the Bharata war as 950 B. C. after computing the average length of reigns from the dates of 14 historical dynasties in other countries ( *italics mine* ). This is what he says, " I have examined 14 series of from 20 to 30 kings in various eastern and western countries; the longest average just exceeded 24 years in one case, the shortest was about 12, and the average of all was 19; but the average was higher in the western countries and lower in eastern countries. Hence as a medium average for these contemporary eastern dynasties we must take something less than 19, and 18 years will be a fair and

1. *Ibid*, pp. 181-82.

2. *Early History of India*, London, 1924, p. 81.

liberal estimate."<sup>1</sup> Finally he concludes that his calculation ' has eliminated all peculiar features and is a reasonable general approximation ', ( adding in a footnote ) with a possible error of being too liberal<sup>2</sup> He has not, however, made available his data, and we do not know to which countries and to which periods these data belonged. It has, therefore, not been possible to examine his data by the application of statistical methods.

Vincent Smith had estimated 25 years as the average length of reigns from Charles to Queen Victoria convering a period 252 years. This Dr. Smith thought, was the maximum possible average duration of reigns in ancient India.<sup>3</sup>

After criticising Smith for using nearly contemporary data, Basham<sup>4</sup> used data drawn from medieval India and thought that he was justified in doing so for want of reliable data from the earlier period. He examined thirteen medieval dynasties in Northern India, containing 156 reigns covering a period of 2901 years. This data gave him nearest to the whole number an average of 19 years per reign. He further considered nine peninsular dynasties containing 14 reigns covering 2273 years, which gave him an average of 20 years per reign. A regression line was fitted to this data by taking the number of reigns as the independent variable *x* and their total duration as the dependent variable *y*. This gave the regression coefficient 17.3, giving the date of the Bharata war as 944 B. C. This statistical study showed that the regression coefficient had a standard error as high as 5.15, which gave at the 5% level two widely varying fiducial limits 7 and 28.6. This meant that if we said that the regression coefficient would lie within these two limits, we have a chance of going wrong in 5 per cent of cases. This gives the time-bracket 690-1197 B. C. for the Bharata war, which does

1. Romila Thapar, MMR, p. 170.

2. Pargiter, AIHT, pp. 181-82.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 183.

4. A. L. Basham, *Studies in Indian History and Culture*, Calcutta, 1964, p. 82.

not take us much further than the one furnished by the archaeological evidence. Basham himself realised the variability of his data and observed that the average length of the reign in the dynasties considered by him is much more variable, ranging from 8 to 28 years per reign. He has finally concluded his study by saying that little reliance can be placed on calculations founded on regnal periods alone.<sup>1</sup>

Coming now to Lal's attempt to give an absolute date for the Bharata war, we find that he has calculated the average of 14 years per reign by taking the reigns of medieval Muslim kings from Qutubuddin Aibak to the last Mughal ruler, Bahadur Shah Jafar. He has also worked the average from the reigns of the Mauryas, the Shungas, the Kanvas, the Satavahanas, and the Guptas.<sup>2</sup> But of these the former period was not free from disturbed conditions involving coups and usurpations, and in the latter period, the dynastic lists are not firmly established. After the Bharata war, the Kuru-Paurava line enjoyed stability of rule for thirty generations without any major disturbances. It is also clear from the part played in the war by the old stalwarts like Bhishma, Drona etc. that longevity was high in those days. For these reasons the average of 14 years worked out by Lal appears to be too low and so unacceptable.

Since it is not easy to get undisputed king-lists of ancient dynasties, we have to form a judgment on the basis of a few facts, which we can glean from the puranas and the Buddhist literature. The last four kings of the Aikshvaku line after Prasenajit, who died in 487 B. C. ruled until the accession of Mahapadma Nanda ( 413 B. C. ), giving an average of 18.5 years. The Mahavamsha gives a list of six kings from Bimbisara to Nagadashaka, covering a period of 132 years, which gives an average of 22 years. Although one cannot be too sure about the succession in the Gupta dynasty, Ghosh has made the following

observations : " If as is universally accepted by historians, the Gupta era started in A. D. 319 with Chandragupta I, then we have to distribute circa 151 years ( circa A. D. 470 minus 319 ) among six rulers - Chandragupta I, Samudragupta, Chandragupta II, Kumaragupta I, Skandagupta and Purugupta ( or Purugupta and Skandagupta ) giving an average reign of 25.16 years. After Skandagupta / Purugupta the order of succession is not firm; if we take Buddhagupta ( end circa A. D. 495 ) as the limit, there will be four additional rulers according to one interpretation of the epigraphical data ( Narasimhagupta, Kumaragupta II, Vishnugupta, and Buddhagupta ), but only two additional ones ( Kumaragupta II and Buddhagupta ) according to another. In the first case the average would be 17.6 years, which is also Lal's average for the Gupta rules, and in the second 22 years.<sup>1</sup> From these facts it is possible to adopt 20 + 2 as the average reign for the 25 kings of Kuru-Paurava dynasty. This may be objected to on the ground that the average reign period is likely to be shorter in long dynasties than in brief ones. But as Basham has pointed out, this assumption of Pargiter is not borne out by his data, as among the dynasties studied by him, several long dynasties such as the Palas, the Eastern Gangas, the Chandellas and the Cholas show a figure above the average. On the basis of 20 + 2 as the average length of reign, the interval between Parikshita II and Udayana comes to 500 + 50 years. Adding to this 36 years ( Yudhisthira's rule ) and 475 years ( end of Udayana's rule ), the date of the Bharata war would lie between 1011 + 50 B. C. As these Kuru-Paurava kings enjoyed stability of rule over a period of 26 generations the average reign period in their case is likely to be over twenty years and so the date of the war may be fixed within the time bracket 1060 B. C.-1010 B. C. In any case this war could not have taken place before 1136 B. C., which is the figure we get by taking 25 years as the extreme limit for the average reign.

1. Basham, op. cit. p. 84.

2. B. B. Lal, MMR, p. 57.

1. A. Ghosha, MMR. p. 150

Adhyaya - 8

## HISTORICITY OF THE BHARATA WAR

The historicity of the Bharata war and the probable date of its occurrence have been subjects of keen controversy ever since indological studies began in the nineteenth century. Dr. D. C. Sircar<sup>1</sup> raised this issue once again in a statement to the U.N. I. on the 14th of September 1975 that after all the Mbh. war was not such a big event and that much of the Mbh. story as we have it is a myth. He gave the following reasons for holding this view : ( 1 ) The strength of the armies as given in the epic lacks credibility; (2) there are no references to this war in the Vedic literature and the Puranas, nor does Kurukshetra figure in them as a battle-field; (3) there is no unanimous tradition about the date of this war among historians and astronomers and the dates usually assigned to it clash with the accepted time-bracket of the Indus Valley Civilization and the coming of the Aryans in India about the middle of the second millennium B. C.; (4) it is inconceivable that the eastern and the Southern States had taken part in this war as stated in the epic, as these States were unknown to Panini ( 5th century B. C. ). He, therefore, thought that people had originally little knowledge about this war, and that only after the Mbh. story gained considerable popularity

with the growth of the epic, they started theorising about the date of the war etc. He concluded by saying that all the stories of earlier digvijayas and empire-building described in the epic have to be regarded as belonging to the domain of mythology and folklore and not of history.

The negative arguments advanced by Dr. Sircar for doubting the historicity of the war have been ably met by P. L. Bhargava in his recent article, " A Fresh Appraisal of the Historicity of Indian Epics."<sup>1</sup> We shall consider later his argument that there is no reference to this war in the Vedic literature and the Puranas. Another argument given by him is that historians and astronomers have assigned divergent dates to the war. If this argument is held valid and applied to kings to whom the historians have assigned different dates, then as pointed out by Sircar, Kanishka or the Satavahanas will have to be regarded as mythical kings. If the dates assigned to the war clash with the accepted time-bracket of the Indus Valley Civilization, then it is a strong argument only for rejecting those dates which do not satisfy this test.

One of the arguments advanced by Sircar is that there are no references to it in the Vedic literature and the Puranas. The only battle mentioned in the Vedic literature is the Dasharajna war in which the Aryan king Sudasa fought against a confederacy of ten kings. This is because two Vedic rishis, Vasishtha and Vishvamitra, happened to be directly involved in the war, as they championed respectively the case of Sudasa and the ten kings as their family priests. The later Vedic literature was entirely preoccupied with ritual and philosophy and took no interest either in the genealogy of the kings or their dynastic wars. As pointed out by Bhargava, the vedic literature has taken note of only those kings who took an active part in an important ritual such as the horse-sacrifice or some philosophical discourse and does not directly mention even those kings

1. MMR pp. 140-41.

1. ABORI, I.XIII ( 1983 ). pp. 17-18.

whose names were known from the patronymics or their sons. Those who patronised the Vedic poets, ritualists and philosophers and gave them liberal gifts are also praised in hymns called danastutis i. e. eulogies of gifts. The main reason as to why there are no references to the Bharata war in the Vedic literature is that it was fought much later.

The Vaishampayana text itself, as reconstructed with the aid of the statistical study, deals only with the war and nothing much else. This in itself should remove any doubt on the point that the nucleus of the epic recorded a historical event. This point is emphasized quite a few times in the epic itself, which employs the words *itivritta* and *itihasa* to denote its contents. Etymologically the word *itivritta* means 'it so happened', *itihasa* means 'it was so'. Apte's Dictionary also gives its meaning as heroic history (such as the *Mahabharata*). As Dr. R. C. Muzumdar points out, Panini takes the word to mean the battle of the Bharatas.<sup>1</sup> In the epic itself Sauti mentions the *Mahabharatayuddha* in the *Shanti* (48.13) and the *Ashvamedha* (60.1) and so refers to the great battle fought on the Kurukshetra and testifies to the historicity of the war.

Although there are no references to the Kurus in the Rigveda and the Brihanmanas, we find mentions therein of the ancestors of the Kurus. The *Mbh.* consistently recognises the royal family of the Kurus as the Bharata family. In the Rigvedic period, the Bharatas had scarcely advanced beyond the region round the river Sarasvati, which came to be recognised as Brahmavarta, the holy land. It was only at a later date, that the country between the upper Yamuna and the Ganga and the district of Delhi came to be occupied by them. The *Shat. Br.*<sup>2</sup> records the triumphs celebrated by Bharata Dauhshyanti after his victories in this region. According to the *Ait. Br.*<sup>3</sup> Bharata was appointed as king in a coronation ceremony by sage

Dirghatamas Mamateya. He is mentioned therein as a king, who had performed an ashvamedha sacrifice. In the epic, the Bharatas do not appear as one of the existing tribes, but the Kaurava princes are referred to as Bhaarata or Bharatanandanas i. e. as descendants of Bharata or as Bharatari-shabhas or Bharatasattamas i. e. the best among the Bharatas. In view of the fact that the Kurus occupied the same territory which was formerly occupied by Bharatas, Rapson<sup>1</sup> came to the conclusion that the region of the river Sarasvati which was occupied by the Bharatas in the time of the Rigveda came to be merged in the Kuru territory, which became famous in history under the name Kurukshetra; the land of the Kurus. This was the scene of the great war, the centre from which the Indo-Aryan culture first spread through Aryavarta and eventually throughout the whole sub-continent.

We also find references to some ancient kings of the Kuru race in the Vedic literature. In a hymn in the Rigveda (X.33), one Kurushravana is mentioned as a king of the Kuru tribe, along with some of his ancestors. In the same hymn he is also called Trasadasyava or a descendant of Trasadasyu, who is wellknown in the Rigveda as a king of the Purus. Another king Pakisthama is praised as a generous donor in the Rigveda (VIII.23) and is designated as Kaurayana. As there have been conscious efforts to trace the origin of the ancient royal dynasties to Manu, the mythical father of mankind, the early portions of these genealogies are of doubtful veracity. The genealogy of the Kurus becomes somewhat more definite with Ajamidha, after whom both Dhritarashtra and Yudhishthira were called aajamidhas, his descendants. Ajamidha is also referred to in the fourth Mandala of the Rigveda (44.6). His son Riksha is probably the same as the one mentioned as a patron in the danastuti in the eighth Mandala of Rigveda (68.14). Perhaps his son is referred to as Arksha in Adi by Sauti.<sup>1</sup> In the Atharvaveda a person called Kauravya is said to

1. bharata sangrahah. Paninisutra. iv. 2-56.

2. Sat. Br. xiii, 5.4. 10-14.

3. Ait. Br. viii. 21.23.

1. Rapson, The Cambridge History of India, Vol. I - p. 17.

have enjoyed prosperity under the rule of king Parikshit. It is stated that this Parikshit was a king of the Kurus, whose kingdom flowed with honey and milk. We shall show later that this Parikshit was an ancestor of the Pandavas and not the grandson of Arjuna. Since only the ancestors of the Kurus find a mention in the Vedic and Brahmanical works, it is obvious that the Bharata war had taken place during the time of their successors.

In the Rigvedic period the Bharatas had scarcely advanced beyond the upper Jamuna and the Ganga, and the district of Delhi had come to be occupied by them. The Kurus, jointly with the Panchalas, find a prominent mention in the Brahmana literature and the authors of the Vedic Index (I-165) are of the view that the great Brahmana works were composed in the Kuru-Panchala country. Eliot points out that at the time the Brahmanas and the earlier Upanishadas were composed, the principal political units in India were the kingdom of the Panchalas and the Kurus in the region of Delhi. The Ait. Br. speaks of the countries of the Kuru-Panchalas as belonging to the Madhyadesha or the middle country. The Kurus occupied the northern portion of the Doab or the region between the rivers of the Yamuna and the Ganga, while the Panchalas held the rest of the Doab as far as the land of the Vatsas upto the confluence of the two rivers. Thus even in the Vedic periods the Kurus and the Panchalas figure as prominent tribes of the Indo-Aryan kshatriyas.

The genealogy of the Kurus becomes somewhat more definite with Ajamidha. The Atharvaveda mentions Parikshit as the king of the Kurus and states that his people flourished in his kingdom. The genealogy as given by Sauti in Adi.89 runs as follows : Ajamidha-Riksha-Samvarana-Kuru-Avikshita-Parikshita-Janamejaya. Both Zimner and Oldenberg recognise Parikshit as a real king, as in later Vedic literature king

Janamejaya bears the patronymic Paarikshita. It is mentioned in the Shat. Br.<sup>1</sup> that his son Janamejaya had unconsciously incurred the sin of murdering a brahmin and had persuaded Devapi Shaunaka to perform the Ashvamedha sacrifice for him. This finds support in Shanti 146-147, which belongs to the Vaishampayana text. The same Brahmana further adds that this Parikshit had three more sons, Bhimasena, Ugrasena and Shritisena and calls them Paarikshityas. Further the Ait. Br. (VIII.21) mentions that Tur Kavasheya, the family priest of Janamejaya had appointed him king by aindra abhisheka and had also taken part in the horse sacrifice of Janamejaya. Now Indrota Shaunaka and Tur Kavasheya figure in the Vedic Index and so must have been anterior to Dhaumya, the family priest of the Pandavas. Again the capital of this Janamejaya is said to be Asandivat and there is not a shred of evidence that the name of this town was changed to Hastinapura later.

Thus the ancestors of the Kauravas and Pandavas find a mention in the Vedic literature. We shall now trace their lineage in the period subsequent to the Bharata war. Vaishampayana text tell us that after the death of Duryodhana, who was the last Kaurava warrior to be killed in the Bharata war, Yudhishthira became the king of Hastinapura. This is supported by the Pali texts<sup>2</sup> according to which the ruling dynasty at Hastinapura belonged to the Yudhishthira gotta or the family of Yudhishthira. The celebrated grammarian Panini also explains the derivation of the word Yudhishthira, evidently referring to the eldest Pandava and also refers to the devotees of Vaasudeva and Arjuna.<sup>3</sup> The author of Bharata, Vaishampayana, is attested as a historical person by Ashvalayana, who mentions in his Shrauta Sutras as an aacarya of Bharata.<sup>4</sup> Both the epics and

1. Mbh. XII - 5.4.1.

2. P.T.S.1.213.

3. Quoted by Prof. Datta in MMR, p. 791.

4. C. V. vaidya. The Mahabharata as a critici.cru. p. 10.

the Puranas are in agreement that the junior line of the Kuru race begining with Yudhisthira ruled for thirty generations. We read in the Vayu Purana ( 99.275 ), that in the reign of Nicakshu, fifth in the line of descent from Janamejaya, the city of Hastinapur was inundated with floods in the Ganga and the capital was then shifted to Kausambi. The Anguttara Nikeya mentions that during the sixth century B. C., there were sixteen states known as Sodashamahajanapadas including the Kuru and Panchala kingdoms ( PHAI, p. 131 ).

The epic tradition too, which dates from the time of Vaishampayana, traces the origin of the Kurus to Puru in adhyaya 147 of the Udyogaparva. There the Kuru kings are said to belong to the lunar race, being the descendants of Soma, the moon-god. Puru is mentioned as the youngest among the five sons of Yayati, son of Nahusha, sixth in descent from Soma. Although Yadu was the eldest son, he was full of hauteur and disrespectful to his father Yayati, who therefore, gave his kingdom to Puru, who showed filial affection and obedience to him. In adhyaya 119 of the Dronaparva, Vaishampayana traces the lineage of Vasudeva, father of Krishna to Yadu, son of Yayati and Devyani, daughter of the Asura priest Shukra. Here it is stated that Yayati was the son of Nahusha, sixth in descent from Soma, but he is said to be the grandson of Pururavas, whom he mentions as the grandson of Soma and fourth in descent from Atri. The three adhyayas 79, 89-90 of Adi, have been added by later narrators, of which the first two adhyayas have been obviously added by Sauti. The adhy. 90 gives the geneology in material particulars and so seems to have been added later.<sup>1</sup>

One of the arguments advanced by Dr. Sircar is that the historians and astronomers have assigned divergent dates to the war. If this argument is held valid and applied to kings to whom historians have assigned different dates, then as pointed

1. This is also confirmed by the fact that this adhyaya contains only five anushtubh Shlokas and is composed in prose.

out by Bhargava, Kanishka or the Satavahanas will have to be regarded as mythical kings. If the dates assigned to the war clash with the accepted time-bracket of the Indus Valley Civilization, then it is a strong reason for shifting the evidence and accepting that evidence which satisfies the above criterion. Another strong argument advanced by Sircar is that the epic gives exaggerated accounts about the nature of the war, the types of weapons used, sizes of the armies on both sides and the magical devices employed by the demon warriors Ghatotkaca and Alayudha in their combats.<sup>1</sup> Here we must remember that what we have before us is not a dry historical chronicle of the war, but epic poetry commemorating the victory of the Pandavas in the war. The exaggerated accounts of the war may be dismissed as instances of hyperbole ( atishayokti ), which is recognised as a figure of speech in poetry. Further epic poetry all over the world is ‘conspicuous for its length and its elevated heroic mood.’ Although it differs from age to age, from language to language, from country to country and according to differing literary traditions, it exhibits certain common characteristics. Firstly in the epic tradition ‘even minor incidents are exaggerated to heroic proportions.’ Secondly ‘even unrelated historical characters and events are projected on a common scene’ without regard to their spatial or temporal settings. And lastly, ‘historical incidents are fused with imaginary accessories, drawn from legend and myth in an inextricable patchwork of fact and fancy.’<sup>2</sup>

2. The Puranas tell us that after Nicakshu shifted his capital to Kausambi, twenty-four Kuru kings from Nicakshu to Kshemaka reigned there. Udayana ( Pali Udena ), who was the twenty-fifth king in this line from Parikshit, lived in the times of Buddha. According to the evidence of the Pali Canon, his contemporaries, were Chanda Pradyota, the king of Avanti,

1. VM. VII. 152-153.

2. Encyclopaedia Britannica. 1968. p. 637.

Prasenajit, king of Kosala and Bimbisara and then Ajatashatru, the king of Magadha. The Puranas further record that only four kings succeeded to the throne of Kosala after Prasenajit and only four kings succeeded to the throne of Vatsa after Udayana. Thus it seems that Avanti, Kosala and Vatsa retained their independence for less than a century after Buddha's death and lost it after their conquest by the first Nanda king.

We see from the Vedic Index that many of the important tribes which took part in the Bharata War existed in the Vedic period. We shall now show that they continued to exist in later periods too. Among the sixteen States referred to in the Anguttara Nikaya, there were, besides the Kuru and Panchala, Shurasena, Avanti, Gandhara, Kamboja, Kashi, Kosala, Cetiya (Cedi) and Vamsa (Vatsa). Panini refers to Yaudheyas, Bahikas, Trigartas and Kambojas. He mentions Yaudheyadi in his sutra 4.1.178, and Patanjali, the author of the Maha-bhasya, says that the term Yaudheyadi refers to Yaudheyas and Trigartas. According to him, Bahika was another name for the Punjab (4.2.117). In the Mayuravyamsakadigana, Panini speaks of the Kambojas as clean-shaven. He also mentions the Madras (2.3.73) and the Vrishnis and the Andhakas (4.1.114, 6.2.34).

In the time of Bimbisara, Pushkarasarin (Pali Pukkusati) was the king of Gandhara, who is stated to have sent an ambassador to him. He is said to have been threatened by the Pandavas, who had occupied most of the Punjab and remained there as late as Ptolemy. In the latter half of the 6th century B.C. Gandhara was occupied by the king of Persia as seen from the Bahistan inscription of Darius and remained so until it was conquered by Alexander.<sup>1</sup>

Bimbisara was, however, unfortunate in regard to his son Kunika or Ajatashatru, who put his father to death and usurped

his throne. Ajatashatru, however, proved to be an energetic ruler, who humbled Kosala and annexed Kashi or part of it as also Vaishali. We read in the Majjhima Nikaya that Ajatashatru feared an invasion of his kingdom by Pradyota and so had fortified his capital. It was during the reign of Ajatashatru that both Mahavira and Gautama are said to have entered nirvana. The Ceylonese aver that all the kings after Ajatashatru were also parrisides. The citizens drove out this family in anger and raised to the throne Shishunaga, who was then acting as viceroy at Benares. The most important achievement of Shishunaga was the destruction of the glory of the Pradyota dynasty.<sup>2</sup>

The Shishunaga dynasty was supplanted by the line of Nandas. The first Nanda who was Mahapadma according to the Puranas and Ugrasena according to Mahabodhivamsha, usurped the throne of Magadha after killing the reigning king of the Shishunaga dynasty. The Jain tradition represents Nanda as the son of a courtesan by a barber. This tradition is confirmed by Curtius, who gives the pedigree of Alexander's contemporary on the throne of Magadha. The puranas describe Mahapadma Nanda as ekarat i.e. the sole monarch of the earth and also as sarvakshatriyatanka i.e. the destroyer of all Kshatriya kings. These epithets would suggest that he had overthrown all the dynasties which ruled contemporaneously with the Shishunagas, including the Kurus, Panchalas, Ikshvakus, Shurasenas etc.<sup>2</sup>

The Nandas, however, did not make any attempt to conquer the States of northern India. This was left to a foreign invader, namely, Alexander of Macedonia. The accounts of Alexander's conquests have been left to us by many historians such as Arrian, Curtius, Plutarch, Strabo and Diodorus, who had accompanied him. Some of the kingdoms mentioned by

1. Law, TAI, p. 16.

1. Raychaudhuri, PHAI, pp. 219, 220, 229.  
2. PHAI, p. 223.

these historians could be identified with those that existed in the times of the Bharata war. Thus Peukelatoes mentioned by Arrian represents Pushkaravati, which formed the western part of the old Gandhara kingdom. Strabo mentions the kingdom of Taxila, which is Takshashila, which formed the eastern part of the old Gandhara kingdom. The kingdom of Arsakes ( Sk. Urasa ) and the adjoining realm of Abhisares ( Sk. Abhisara ) were probably offshoots of the old kingdom of Kamboja. The kingdom of old Poros, who gave a hard fight to Alexander, lay between the Jhelum and Chenab and roughly corresponded to the old territory of Kekaya. At this time the younger Poros, his nephew, ruled over the country between Chenab and Ravi, the old Madra kingdom. The Greek historians also mention the Ambashtas, Diodorus calling it Sambastai and Arrian Abastanoi; they had settled down above the confluence of the Chenab and were a powerful tribe with a democratic government.<sup>1</sup>

In the fourth century B. C. Chandragupta Maurya overthrew the last infamous king of the Nanda dynasty with the help of Kautilya, also known as Visnugupta or Chanakya, a brahmin of Takshashila. Kautilya<sup>2</sup> mentions in his Arthashastra that the Kamboja warriors lived by agriculture, trade and profession of arms. He describes the Kurus, Panchalas and Madras as rajashabdopajivinah i. e. enjoying the status of kings. The exact significance of this phrase is not known. However, we find an account given by Diodorus of the political constitution of Taula ( Patala ), a country situated in the Indus delta. In this community the command in war was vested in two hereditary kings, while a council of elders ruled the whole State with paramount authority. It is possible that at this time these States were ruled by elders, who enjoyed the status of rajas.<sup>3</sup> Plutarch

1. Ibid., pp. 247-250, 255.

2. Shamashastri's Translation, p. 445.

3. Raychaudhuri, PHAI, p. 259.

tells us that after overthrowing the Nandas and liberating the Punjab from the prefects of Alexander, Chandragupta subdued the whole of India with an army of six hundred thousand strong. However the exact number of provinces in Chandragupta's kingdom is not known!<sup>1</sup>

When Ashoka ascended the throne of Magadha, the ancient kingdoms of Avanti, Vatsa and Kosala were already included in the Mauryan empire. In the early years he followed his predecessors' policy of expansion within India and of friendly cooperation with foreign powers. In the thirteenth year of his reign he effected the conquest of Kalinga. Appalled by the senseless slaughter involved in the Kalinga war, he decided to base his authority not on military force but on the unifying force of a common dharma. We do not know the exact limits of the Magadhan empire in the days of Ashoka. Among the places which Ashoka mentions as forming part of his kingdom are Magadha, Kaushambi, Kalinga, Ujjain and Takshashila. Beyond Takshashila his empire extended as far as the realm of Antiyoko Yonaraja, usually identified with Antiochus II Theos of Seria ( 261-246 B. C. ). He is stated to have sent missionaries to the kingdoms on the borders of his empire viz. Kambojas, Gandharas, Yonas etc. with the object of converting them to Buddhism. He celebrates their conversion to true dharma in Rock Edict XIII.<sup>2</sup>

The Mauryan empire did not take long to disintegrate after the death of Ashoka. His attempt to unite the different sections of the population under a common Dhamma did not endure. The central authority became weak as it now lacked a strong military force. The last Maurya emperor Brihadratha was, according to the Puranas and Harshacarita, assassinated by his general Pushyamitra, who usurped the throne and founded the Shunga line of kings. Pushyamitra ruled from about 187 to 151 B. C.

1. PHAI, p. 269.

2. Ibid., pp. 307-310.

and his dominions extended to the river Narmada and included the cities of Patalipura, Ayodhya and Vidisha ( modern Besanagar ). During his reign the incursions of the Yavanas received a check, and there was an outburst of activity in the domain of religion and art. Inscriptions at Vidisha and Ghosundi testify to the growing importance and wide prevalence of the Bhagavata religion. We learn from the Besanagar inscription that during the reign of the fifth Shunga king Kashiputra Bhagabhadra, the Greek king Antalikhita ( Antialkidas ) sent to him Heliodorus, a native of Taxila, as his ambassador. This ambassador, though a Greek, professed the Bhagavata religion and set up a Garudadhvaja in honour of Vaasudeva ( Krishna ), whom he described as the God of gods.<sup>1</sup>

We learn from the Junagadha inscription of the Shaka king Rudradaman ( 130-150 A. D. ) that his conquests extended to Sindhu-sauvira and even to the land of the Yaudheyas. The same inscription shows that his dominions included the countries of Avanti, Anupa and Anarta. Among the States which paid homage to Samudragupta in the fourth century A.D. are mentioned the Malavas, Yaudheyas and the Madrakas.<sup>2</sup>

Fa Hien, a Chiense piligrim, who came to India in the fifth century A. D. visited Gandhara, Mathura, the capital of the Shurasenas, Sravasti, the capital of Kosala and Kausambi and the capital of the Vatsas. Another Chinese piligrim, Hsuan Tsang visited India in the 7th century A. D. He has left an interesting account of Gandhara after visiting it. He knew Purushapura ( Peshavar ) as the capital of Gandhara and had also been to Takshashila, which he mentions as a dependency of Kashmir. After visiting Shakala, the capital of Madras and Mathura, the capital of the Shurasenas, he visited Isipatana ( modern Saranath ) in Kashi, where Buddha is said to have preached his first sermon after his enlightenment. He also went to Shravasti, but found

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 368-371, 394.

2. PHAI, pp. 467, 544.

that this once splendid capital of Kosala had lost its ancient glory. When he paid a visit to Kausambi, the capital of Vatsas, he saw more than ten monasteries in or near about the town, but found all of them in utter ruin. But more importantly, as pointed out by Prof. V N. Datta, Hsuan Tsang, who had also visited Kurukshetra in 634 A. D. refers to a popular tradition regarding a terrible battle, which had taken place in the region of Thanesar in remote times and states that ' the entire area was covered with bones, which were still visible to him.<sup>1</sup> This supports a reference in the Puranas to Asthipura or a city of bones, which Cunningham has identified as the site where the cremation of those slain in the battle had taken place.<sup>2</sup>

In the absence of epigraphic and numismatic evidence, the historian of ancient times has perforce to depend on indirect evidence, which, if sufficiently positive, cannot be brushed aside by negative arguments. To recapitulate, the following facts gathered from the Puranas appear to be sufficiently corroborated by Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jain literature and archaeological evidence. ( 1 ) Yudhishthira, who belonged to the junior line of the Kurus, became the king of Hastinapura and he and his descendants ruled first at Hastinapura and then at Kaushambi for thirty generations without any challenge from the descendants of the senior branch; this would not have become possible without the extinction of this senior branch in the war as stated in the Epic. ( 2 ) If we leave out of account the hyperbolic descriptions of the battles and the weapons, which are characteristic of epic poetry all over the world, we find that the four-fold nature of the army and the weapons with which this war was fought remained in vogue in later periods. In the excavations carried out at Atranjikhera, iron arrow-heads, spear-heads and shafts have been found at the P. G. W. culture levels.

1. Buddhist Records of the Western World, trans. by Samuel Beal, quoted by Prof. Datta in MMR, p. 791.

2. Archaeological Survey of India, Report XIV, 1970, p. 94.

(3) Although this war started as a family feud between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, almost all the tribes which had strong family ties or cultural affinity with them took part in the war. These tribes were real and existed from Vedic times, and they find a mention in the literature of the later periods also. (4) And most important of all is the fact that the original Bharata as disclosed by these linguistic studies gives only an account of the war and nothing else. So it cannot be explained as a Panchama Veda,<sup>1</sup> because the encyclopaedic character of the present epic with its central theme of Dharma and Niti is due entirely to later additions.

Dr. Sircar is, however, right when he says that all the stories of the earlier digvijayas as empire-building described in the Epic belong to the domain of mythology and folklore and not history. The linguistic studies show that their accounts as given in the Ashvamedhikaparva and the Sabhaparva have been added by Suta and Sauti respectively. His further statement that it is inconceivable that the eastern and southern States could have taken part in the war as stated in the Epic is also true. As we saw in chapter VI, no prominent king or warrior from the East or South had fought in the war, and so all accounts of their having done so are later interpolations. This is also indirectly supported by archaeological evidence as no site of the P. G. Ware culture, which is associated with the Mbh. culture, has been found so far beyond the river Sadanira (Rapti) in the East and the Pariyatra mountains in the South.<sup>2</sup> This event is recorded in the Mausala Parva adhyaya 8, which discloses the Beta-style and has been added by the author of the Parvasangraha in the first century B. C.<sup>3</sup>

While, therefore, many of the events described by the

subsequent redactors probably belong to the domain of myths and folklore, nevertheless a few of them may contain some historical truth. For instance, the retirement of Dhritarashtra along with Gandhari and Kunti in the forest and their subsequent deaths in the forest conflagration may not be without some historical basis. The civil war among the Bhoja and Vrishni tribes could also have taken place before the death of Krishna, as the seeds of dissension between them had already been sown in the Bharata war with the Bhoja warrior Kritavarma and the Vrishni warrior Satyaki joining the opposite sides. The submergence of Dvaraka is also attested by the archeological excavations carried out by Sankalia in this town, but the date of its occurrence is doubtful. Sankalia places this event in the second century B. C. This event, however, is recorded in the adhyaya 8 of the Mausala Parva, which discloses the Beta-style, while the remaining seven adhyayas have been added by Suta. It is not beyond the range of possibility that above three verses have been added by Harivamshakara who telescoped the two events, namely the death of Lord Krishna and the submergence of Dvaraka in the sea in 200 B. C. to give them a supernatural flavour.<sup>4</sup> However this question would be set at rest only after oceanographic research is carried out into the remains of the ancient city in the sea.

1. M. C. Joshi, MMR, p. 160.

2. R. C. Gaur, MMR, p. 69.

3. Adhyaya 8 of the Mausala Parva has the sum of squares 3395.6 with variance 377.29 (d. f. 9) and so belongs to the Beta-style.

## Adhyaya - 9

# EPIC GEOGRAPHY

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Long before the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute completed its project of bringing out the first ever Critical Edition of the Mahabharata in 1966, the idea of writing an Epilogue was first mooted by Dr. S. K. Belwalkar. He had produced a detailed outline for the epilogue and included it in the Prospectus of the Critical and illustrated Edition of the Mahabharata issued by the Mahabharata Editorial Board in October 1951. He had raised therein the following questions : (i) whether the kernel of the epic story was a real historical event and if so, (ii) what was the date of the first literary composition describing that event, the Jaya attributed to Vyasa and the text elaborated from it, which was known as Bharata attributed to Vaishampayana, the disciple of Vyasa; (iii) the possibility of the multiple authorship of the epic; (iv) and whether it would enable us to determine the flora and fauna of the country and the state of agriculture, transport etc. during the periods of the growth of the epic. The other questions suggested by Belwalkar were : (v) the state of knowledge and the system of education prevalent in those times, (vi) the study of the social organisation, which opens up such extensive fields of enquiry as the division of the country, the institution of slavery, the caste system etc. This part

is based more or less on the suggestions made by Dr. Belwalkar and so I have dedicated the part II to him.

Although the war arose out of a family feud between Kauravas and Pandavas over their respective claims to rule over Hastinapura, it did not remain confined to the Kuru tribe and the tribes closely related to them. For the determination of the tribes which actually took part in the war, we shall have , for obvious reasons, to confine our attention only to those portions of the war passages, which belong to the Vaishanpayana text. This is essential because much of the information contained in the Mbh. about the geography of the country and of inter-regional contacts among the tribes pertains to the Adi (excepting the three adhyayas 55-59 ), Sabha, Aranyaka and Ashvamedhika parvas, which have been added by later redactors.

Another tribe which is frequently mentioned is mlechchha, which is evidently used to designate the tribes within the country; for it is mentioned that Bhagadatta, the king of Pragjyotisha is referred to as mlechchha and he is also said to have ruled over two yavana kings ( II. 13 ). As regards the participation of yavanas and shakas, B.C. Law ( TAI, p. 84 )<sup>1</sup> observes that as the yavanas and shakas did not appear in Indian history before the fifth and second century B.C. respectively, the passages in which the mention of these tribes occur must be regarded as later interpolations. However, it is necessary to devise some objective method by which we can identify the tribes which actually fought in the war. We consider only those tribes which are mentioned in the Vaishampayana text to have taken part in the war and fought under a king or a warrior from the start to the end . To this we must add a corollary that two neighbouring tribes might have elected to

<sup>1</sup> I. what follows, I acknowledge with gratitude that I have made extensive use of the material and references so painstakingly collected by B.C. Law in his scholarly work, Tribes in Ancient India. I have given separate acknowledgements whenever I have quoted his views or conclusions.

fight under one leader, for which the following instances may be quoted. The chedis and the karushas fought under the chedi king Dhrushtaketu, the Sindhuses and Sauvieras fought under king Jayadratha and the Vrishnis and the Andhakas fought under the Vrishni warrior Satyaki.

At this time there were six northern tribes, namely yaudheyas, madras and bahlikas, as also kekayas, ambashthas and trigartas. These tribes took part in the Bharata war on the side of the Kauravas. We find the first three tribes grouped together in the Dronaparva. Cunningham identifies the Yaudheyas with johia rajputs and their country Johiapur (yaudheyapura), the district round Multan. According to a passage in the Critical Edition (VII.30.35), the bahlikas seem to have lived between Sultej and the Indus. This passage also states that the bahlikas were also known as arattas and jartikas (jats) and that their capital was Shakala, modern Sialkot. The madras, according to Law, occupied the region between Chinab and Ravi.

The Yaudheyas, who perhaps fought under the Madra king Shalya, were defeated by Arjuna, (VII.18, VIII.4). The bahlika king Somadatta and his valiant son Bhurishrava fought on the side of Kauravas. The bahlika king is said to be a descendent of the Kuru king Pratipa (Pratipeya, V.23) or Kauraveya (VII.114). Somadatta was killed by Bhima (VII.132) and Bhurishravca was killed by Satyaki (VII.118). The reason as to why Shalya, maternal uncle of the Pandavas fought on the side of the Kauravas, is not clear. Suta's explanation that while he was on his way to the Pandavas, he was royally entertained by Duryodhana and so promised him his support, is hardly convincing. Shalya became the last general of the Kauravas and was killed by Yudhishthira in a straight fight (IX.16).

Of the three remaining northern states, the kekaya territory, according to Valmiki lay beyond Vidisha (Beas) and extended upto the Gandhara kingdom and its metropolis was Rajagriha or Girivraja, which was different from the Girivraja of the Magadha kingdom. According to Rajataranigini (V.144)

the ambashthas occupied the region not far from Kashmir. Hemachandra's Abhidhanacintamani says that the Trigarta country is the same as Jallundar, and epigraphic evidence also points to the same fact.

The kekayas fought on both sides, their king Suvarma and his brother Anuvinda fighting on the side of the Kauravas and the kekaya prince Brihatkshatra and his four brothers fighting on the side of the Pandavas. Brihatkshetra was killed in the battle by Drone (VII.101) and the kekaya king and his brother were slain by Satyaki (VIII.9). The ambashthas took the side of the Kauravas and their king Shrutayu was killed by Arjuna (VII.68). The Trigarta heroes known as Samshaptkas, who were bound by an oath to kill Arjuna, gave him a hard fight. Their king Susharma fought a stiff battle with Arjuna and was finally slain by him (IX.26).

At this time there were on the northern frontiers of India two prominent tribes, the gandharas and kambojas. It is now generally accepted that Gandhara denotes the region comprising, the modern districts of Peshawara in the N.W.F. province and that Ravalapindi which lies in Pakistan. Kamboja is constantly associated with Gandhara in the Mbh. and so that country too must have been located in some part of North India close to Gandhara. Scholars differ about the location of Kamboja, which like Gandhara, was also famous for its horses and blankets. Sir Charles Eliot thought that the Kambojas were probably Tibetans, which finds support in the Nepalese tradition which applies the name Kambojadesha to Tibet. The Mbh. however, includes the Kamboja country along with Gandhara in the Uttarapatha i.e. far north of India and connects it with a place called Rajapura. From the association of the Kambojas with the Gandharas, this Rajapura could be identified with the territory of that name mentioned by Hsuan Tsang<sup>1</sup>, which lay to the south or the south-east of Puscha. The Western boundaries of Kamboja must have reached Afghanistan.

1. Watters, On Yuan Chwang, Vol. I. p. 284

( Law, p. 3 ).

Like their neighbours the kambojas, the gandharas reared pedigree horses and fought for the most part on horseback. Shakuni, the gandhara prince, being the maternal uncle of the Kauravas, played a key-role in the Bharata war and the gandhara troops led by him made a powerful division of the Kaurava army. He and his son Uluka were killed by Sahadeva in the war ( IX.27 ). The Kambrijas were also the allies of the Kauravas and seem to have been consistently in the thick of the battle. Their king Sudarshana was killed in a single combat by Arjuna ( VII.67 ).

The Western tribes which took part in the war were the sindhu-sauviras, the anupas and the shurasenas and vrishnyandhakas. The sindhu-Sauvira country formed part of the lower Indus valley. The Shurasena country had originally its capital at Mathura, which had been a famous city from early times. After Krishna killed the Bhoja king Kamsa of Mathura, the Magadha king Jarasandha laid seige to Mathura with a large army to avenge the death of his son-in-law. The vrishnis and andhakas, in order to avoid trouble, left Mathura and established their capital at Dvaraka. The bhojas or shurasenas also seem to have left Mathura and settled down in the Anarta country, for a passage in Karnaparva ( VIII.4 ) mentions that Kritavarma, a bhoja warrior, was a resident of the Anarta country. This Anarta country must, therefore, have been nearabout Dvaraka. Anupa literally means a marshy tract not lying very far from the sea.

The saindhavas and sauviras played an important part in the Bharata war under the leadership of Jayadratha, who fought for the Kauravas, being the husband of Duryodhana's sister Dushilaa. He had taken a leading part in isolating Abhimanyu from his supporting warriors and killing him. When Arjuna returned after killing the samshaptakas, he learnt about the death of his son and the part played by Jayadratha in bringing that about and vowed to kill him. He fulfilled his vow by killing

him ( VII.121 ). The king of Anupa was a friend of Bhima and fought on the side of the Pandavas and was killed by Ashvatthama ( VII.30 ).

The shurasenas and the vrishnyandhakas claimed descent from Yadu, son of Yayati by Devayani, daughter of asura priest Shukra and so were known as Yadavas. This tribe was also commonly known as satvata, its clans being distinguished by different names such as shurasenas, vrishnis and andhakas. Probably the killing of Kamsa by Krishna caused a rift between the two clans and resulted in their taking opposite sides in the Bharata war. Kritavarma joined the Kauravas with a division of troops and fought many valiant battles with the Pandava warriors, especially Satyaki. Satyaki, a Vrishni warrior was, on the other hand, a friend and disciple of Arjuna and so fought on the side of the Pandavas. Both survived the war, but only to perish in the internecine war which arose among the Yadava clans thirty-six years after the Bharata war ( XVI.4 ).

Turning to the middle country ( Madhyadesha ) there were the panchalas, the shalvas and the matsyas. The panchalas were next to the kurus in importance and were connected with the Vedic civilization of the Brahmana period. In the epic period, the Panchala country comprised Rohilkhinda and a part of central Doab. It was divided at this time into two kingdoms, the river Bhagirathi forming the dividing line. The Northern Panchala had its capital at Ahichchhatra which, according to V. A. Smith, is the modern Ramanagara of Bareilly district. Southern Panchala had its capital at Kampilya, which Cunningham identified with Kampila on the old Ganga between Budeon and Farokhabad. The shalvas and matsyas were important tribes from ancient times and were often referred to as a dual group shalva-matsyas. The capital of matsyas has been identified by Cunningham with Bairat in the former Jaipura State and so the shalvas probably occupied the territory of the former princely State of Alvar.

During the Bharata war the Panchala King Drupada, being the father-in-law of the Pandavas, took their side and contributed a division of troops to their army. Both his son Shikhandi and Dhrishtadyumna fought in the war and the latter was given the command of the Pandava army. Drupada was killed by Drona in battle ( VII.161 ) and his sons were killed in the massacre perpetrated by Ashvatthama on the last day of the war. Two other Panchala warriors who fought in the war were Yudhamnyu and Uttamauja. The shalvas fought on the side of the Kauravas and their mighty king Ugrasena met his death at the hands of Satyaki ( IX.19 ). As the daughter of king Virata was married to Arjuna's son Abhimanyu, king Virata and his two sons Shankha and Uttara joined the Pandava army and laid their lives on the battle-field. King Virata was killed by Drona ( VII. 161 ).

To the South of the Panchala country were the kingdoms of dasharnas, the avantis and the chedis. The dasharnas dwelt on the river Dasan ( Dhasant ) in Bundelkhanda. Avanti roughly corresponded to Ujjain region divided into two parts. The northern part drained by the river Shipras had its capital at Ujjaini ( modern Ujjain ), while the southern part Avanti had its capital at Mahishmati. It seems that the matsyas were the immediate neighbours of chedis on the west and Kashis on the east. According to D. R. Bhandarkar, Cheta or Chedi corresponded roughly to modern Bundelkhanda. The epic also frequently mentions the karushas along the matsyas; the kashis and the chedis. According to Pargiter, the country of the karushas lay to the south of Kashi and Vatsa, between Chedi on the west and Magadha on the east enclosing the Kaimur hills; so it was roughly equivalent to the country of Rewa.

The dasharnas figure in the Mbh. as one of the tribes who fought on the side of the Pandavas. The Dasharma king at this time was Kshatradeva, who fought valiantly on elephant back ( VI.91 ). The avantis formed a powerful kshatriya clan in the epic time. Their dual rulers, Vinda and Anuvinda, contributed each a division of troops to the Kaurava forces. They are

designated as maharathas and figure very prominently in many battles of the Bharata war. They finally met their deaths at the hands of Arjuna ( VII.74 ). The Chedi king, who became prominent in the epic period was Shishupala, son of Damaghosha by Shutashravaa, sister of Vasudeva. Though he was related to Krishna, he joined Kamsa and Jarasandha who were enemies of Krishna and became the latter's general. His son Dhrishtaketu, however, who had succeeded to the throne of Chedi after his father's death joined the Pandavas and led one complete division. It is stated in the epic that the chedis, the kashis and karushes were led by Dhrishtaketu, who was killed by Drona ( VII.101 ).

To the south-east of Hastinapura lay the kingdoms of Kashi, Kosala and Vatsa. Kashi was the ancient name of the kingdom which had its capital at Varanasi, modern Banaras. The Vatsa country was located round about Kaushambi, which Cunningham has identified with Kasam not far from Allahabad. According to the Cambridge History of India ( Vol. I, pp. 308-309 ), Kosala lay to the east of the Kuru and Panchala lands and to the west of the Videha country, from which it was separated by the river Sadanira, probably the great Gaudaka; the epic, however, distinguishes Gandaka from Sadanira<sup>1</sup> Pargiter, therefore, identifies the Sadanira with Rapti ( PHAI, p. 53 ).

The kashis and the vatsas are said to have taken part in the war on the side of the Pandavas. Perhaps both the kashis and vatsas were led by Dhrishtaketu as the king of Vatsa is not separately mentioned. The kosala kings belonged to the solar race, with Ikshvaku as their eponymous ancestor. In the Vedic literature, however, the ikshvakus are said to be originally a branch of the Purus. Brihadbala was the king of Kosala at this time and he embraced the cause of Kauravas. We read in the Dronaparva ( 51 ) that he was killed by Abhimanyu.

<sup>1</sup>. gandakiyam tatha shanom sadaniram tathawa ca, II. 18-27.

Another powerful king who sided with the Kauravas was Bhagadatta, who ruled over the kingdom of Pragjyotisha. Pragjyotisha literally means ' lighted from the east ' and so with the march of Aryana civilization in the east, it came to be identified later with the eastermost part of India, namely Kamarupa or Assam. The epic speaks of it as a country situated in the north of India ( II.23 ). According to Law the mountainous regions called Antargiri, Bahirgiri and Upagiri in the Mbh. ( II.24 ) appear to comprise the lower slopes of the Himalayas and the Nepal terrain and it is not unlikely that the pragjyotishas lived contiguously, as Bhagadatta is called shailalaya i.e. one who has his abode in the mountains. Bhagadatta is often mentioned in respectful terms and is said to be equal of Indra in valour ( VI.91 ). There are many stirring descriptions of his duels with the Pandava warriors. He gave a hard fight to Arjuna, but was finally killed by him ( VII.28 ).

To the east of the river Gandaka, lived the videhas and the magadhas and still further lived the angas, vangas and the kalinagas. They find specific mention only in the later redactions of the epic, such as the campaigns undertaken by the Pandavas in connection with the Rajasuya and Ashvamedha sacrifices. The Vaishampayana text does not mention the name of the king of Videha, and although there are a few stray references to the king of Magadha having fought in the war, he is said to be Jayatsena, son of Jarasandha, and not his descendant Sahadeva, who was a contemporary of the Kauravas. There is also not much of evidence of the king of Vangas as having fought in the war and the references to the part played by the king are few and far between. There is no reference to these kings in the Bhismaparva ( 43 ) which gives the names of the warriors who were present at the start of the war. They also do not find any mention in adhyayas 162-168 of the Udyogaparva ( added by Suta ) in which Bhishma is said to have assessed the worth of the warriors on both sides. This

clearly proves that the tribes to the east of the river Sadanira or Rapti had not taken part in the war.

Even when we confine our attention to the Vaishampayana text, a large number of tribes is stated to have taken part in the war including the yavanas and shakas. As regards the participation of the yavanas and shakas in the Bharata war. Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar observes : " These people were outside the kingdom of Antioccos Theo. Coins similar to those of the earliest types of Athens are known to have been collected from the N. W. Frontiers of India. They bear the head of Athens on the obverse and owls on the reverse. " He, therefore, concludes that the original owls of Athens have been assigned to 554-560 B. C. a Greek colony may have been established near India about 550 B. C. B. C. Law ( TaI. p. 84 ) observes that as the yavanas and shakas did not appear in Indian history before the fifth and the second century B. C., the passages in which the mention of these tribes occurs must be regarded as later interpolations.

This account of epic geography will not be complete without the mention of two important geographical events which took place during the epic period. One is the disappearance of the river Sarasvati and the other was the influx of yavanas in this country. In the Rigvedic period the Bhaaratas had scarcely advanced beyond the country of the river Sarasvati which came to be remembered afterwards with special veneration as Brahmaparta, the holy land. It was only at a later date that the country between the Yamuna and the Ganga and the district Delhi came to be occupied by them. Rapson came to the conclusion that the Bhaaratas, who were settled in the country of the river Sarasvati in the time of Rigveda ( III. ii. 3, 4 ) were merged in the Kurus and this whole territory, now together with the old, became famous in history under the name Kurukshetra - the field of the Kurus.

According to B. C. Law<sup>1</sup> Sarasvati and Drishadvati were two historical rivers of Uttarapatha that flowed down independently without belonging to the Indus group. Manu locates the region Brahmavarta between these two sacred streams. The Sarasvati is described in Milindapanha as a Himalayana river and its source is traceable to the Himalayan range above the Simla hills. The Mbh. states that this river disappeared in the sand and reappeared again at three places ( Aranyaka, VIII ). According to Law, ' this river still survives and flows between Shatadru ( Sutlaja ) and the Yamuna and adds that it is not improbable that Sarasvati was known to the Vedic people as a mighty river, which flowed into the sea.<sup>2</sup>

1. B. C. Law, Rivers of India, Calcutta, Geographical Society, Publication no. 6,  
1844.

<sup>2</sup> Max Muller, Rigveda Sambita, p. 46.

Adhyaya - 10

## BHARATA AS HEROIC POETRY

Historical methods may be divided into two groups: historical and comparative. The former is concerned with the study of the past as it has been handed down to us through written documents, and the latter with the comparison of different societies in order to discover their common features and the causes of their differences. Both methods have their own advantages and disadvantages. The historical method is based on a careful examination of primary sources, such as manuscripts, letters, diaries, and other written documents. It requires a great deal of time and effort to collect and analyze these sources, but it provides a detailed and accurate picture of the past. The comparative method, on the other hand, is based on a comparison of different societies, either past or present, in order to discover their common features and the causes of their differences. This method is less time-consuming than the historical method, but it may not provide as much detail as the historical method. Both methods have their own advantages and disadvantages, and it is important to remember that they are complementary rather than对立的.

We have fixed the age of Vaishampayana's Bharata as the tenth century B. C. The Indian heroic age may, therefore, be taken to be almost contemporaneous with the Greek heroic age, for as stated by Chadwicks ( pp. 174-183 ) the evidence of tradition seems to bring the Greek heroic age to the close of the eleventh century B. C. Since the Teutonic, Welsh and Russian heroic poetry belonged to the period after the fourth century A. D., they are not strictly comparable with the Greek or Indian heroic poetry. This chapter is based on the excellent works of two authors, N. K. Sidhanta<sup>1</sup> and H. Monro Chadwick and N. Korshav Chadwick.<sup>2</sup> I am grateful to Dr. A. M. Ghatge, then Secretary, Bhandarkar Oriental Institute for bringing the work of the latter authors to my notice.

Vaishampayana tells us categorically that his epic is a historical work called Jaya and it ought to be heard by one who desires victory in war.<sup>3</sup> As stated before this term describes later in Udyogaparva ( 134-17 ) the episode known as Vidurapi t-

1. N. K. Sidhanta, *The Heroic Age of India*, London, 1929.
  2. H. Monro Chadwick and N Korshav Chadwick; *The Growth of Literature*, Vol. I, Cambridge, 1982.
  3. Jayo name 'tithaso' 'yam shrotavyo vijigishuna'. V.M.I. - 56-19.

nushasana added by him. This is the story of the dowager queen Vidura, who in a true kshatriya spirit, exhorted her son to fight again manfully and wrest his kingdom back from his enemy, which he did. When Krishna called upon Kunti before the war and asked for a message from her to her sons, she said that he should tell the Pandavas as from her that they should fight like kshatriyas and regain their kingdom from the Kauravas. It is to be noted that while telling this story, Kunti describes it as jaya and says that whoever recites it would win victory and conquer the world. We saw earlier that Vyasa did not compose a work called Jaya. In this connection, Sukthankar observes<sup>1</sup> that perhaps Jaya is a technical term applicable to a certain class of literary works and not the specific name of Vyasa's work, as is commonly supposed. Jaya seems to be a technical term for heroic poetry and its recitation is said to engender the heroic spirit in the listeners and enthuse them to win the war. It would be interesting to see how far the Bharata of Vaishampayana possesses the features of heroic poetry, when compared with the Greek heroic epics Iliad and Odyssey.

It is curious that the Indian heroic poetry is almost contemporaneous with the Greek heroic age. As Siddhanta has pointed out the evidence of tradition seems to bring the end of the latter period towards the close of the eleventh century before Christ<sup>2</sup> and similar evidence points to the middle of the eleventh century for the end of the Indian heroic poetry. Prof. Chadwick sums up the conditions requisite for a heroic age in the phrase, "Mars and the Muses." (See HA. pp. 440 fn.). We should be thankful to Vaishampayana and the bards Suta and Sauti for the preservation of the Indian heroic tradition.

Poems of war are not unknown in ancient Sanskrit literature, for instance, in the Rigveda, there is a hymn (VII.18)

1. Sukthankar : Addenda and Corrigenda to the Adiparva, Note on I - 58.19, p. 989.

2. See Chadwick, HA. pp. 174 - 183.

which describes the victory of King Sudasa over ten rivals and the defeat of Shambara by Divodasa, which finds a repeated mention. But we get the best sample of heroic poetry in the description of a horse-sacrifice in the Shat. Br. (XIII. 1.6.), where we are told that a brahmin sings by day and a kshatriya by night; they play on the lute and sing; the brahmin sings of topics such as 'sacrifices he offered - such gifts he gave, but the kshatriya sings, such a war he waged, such a battle he won.' What this kshatriya was singing may be said to belong to the stage I of heroic poetry.<sup>1</sup> In the epic we get definite evidence of narrative poetry, and we are told that the Bharata was recited by Vaishampayana in the court of Janamejaya, the great-grandson of the Pandava hero Arjuna. Further evidence for the transmission of narratives as songs is to be found in the nature of particular descriptions. A good example is found in the gambling scene of adhyaya II, but the most important instance is that Vaishampayana describes the main story as a heroic poem (jaya). Siddhanta further remarks that the task of the critic of the Indian heroic age is made difficult by the accretion of different layers upon the main story of the epic. What was purely a heroic poem has been transformed into a fifth Veda and the spiritual interest is often made more prominent than the worldly. However, it has been possible to separate the original poem of Vaishampayana by the statistical method (See chapter III).

According to the statistical study, Valmiki's original Ramayana has recorded a fairly true picture of the battle that took place and the types of weapons used by the contending parties. Siddhanta (89) says that the Ramayana is far removed from the heroic plane, as the story proceeds in the regular narrative fashion and not in the form of questions and answers. He adds that in Valmiki's Ramayana, speeches take up a much smaller portion of the whole and even though there are occasional expressions of heroic sentiments, the lust of glory

1. Siddhanta, HA. p. 56.

and the passion for war are markedly absent in it. He further observes that when faced with disaster, Rama does not show the burning passion for vengeance, but wastes his time in weak complaints and religious reflection. Thus though the original Ramayana satisfies some of the characteristics of heroic poetry such as the anonymity of its author and the interest of the poem in the fortunes of the individual heroes, it is described by the authors of the *Mbh.* not as heroic poetry (*jaya*) but as *adikavya*. As the ancient story goes, when Valmiki beheld a pair of Kraunch birds being killed by a fowler, his grief unconsciously took the form of a verse.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently he was told by Brahma to compose the life of Rama and thereafter he came to be known as Adikavi and his Ramayana as *adikavya*.

The two Greek epics and the earliest phase of Teutonic poetry represented by the English heroic epic *Beowulf* are primarily narrative poems. They are stories of adventure, not so much concerned with the fortunes of nations as with individual heroes and their heroic deeds. The interest in *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is not to advance any Greek cause or to annex any new territory. In view of the importance attached to personal honour and glory, it is not surprising to find that personal wrongs, especially insults and outrages to dignity, are among the most prolific sources of strife. Such is the case not only with the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon, which forms the subject of *Iliad*, but with the siege of Troy itself. Another cause is the abduction of women and plundering of cattle. This is the main theme of *Odyssey* in which Odyssus is said to have abducted women and plundered the cattle of Cicones.<sup>2</sup> As regards the Indian epic *Bharata*, the *Bharata* war was also not undertaken to advance any Aryan cause or to annex any new territory, but to redress the personal wrong, as the Pandavas felt that they did not receive their rightful share of the kingdom after their

return from forest exile. The cattle raids are conspicuously absent in the *Bharata*, which refers to it only once,<sup>1</sup> but such cattle raids have been incorporated later by Suta and Sauti.

It is surprising to see the extent to which the *Bharata* of Vaishampayana possesses the features of Greek heroic poetry. In the latter we hardly find any references to the ancestors or successors of the Greek heroes. The *Bharata* is said to have been recited at the court of Janamejaya, the great grandson of Arjuna. Yet in the epic itself no one later than Abhimanyu, son of Arjuna has taken a leading part in the *Bharata* war. The birth of Abhimanyu's son Parikshita finds only a cursory mention in the *Bharata*. The ancestors beyond Bhishma do not figure in the main story of the war, but find mention in the legends, which are later accretions to the *Vaishampayana* text. Sidhanta observes as follows : "In these cases, as in other stories dealing with the far past, the invention of the poet colours old myths and folk-tales. It is doubtful if he ever made up a whole story or created creatures of flesh and blood out of his own imagination. In his treatment of the main stories he may introduce fictitious details or pervert order of facts; but he is never purely a Maker." While he may bring the same person in contact with heroes of different ages, he does not introduce them as actors in the same story. This is also true of the *Vaishampayana* text.

Folk-tales often find their way into heroic poetry. Thus Panzer discovered about two hundred variants of the Grendel story current in the different parts of Europe and Asia ( Sidhanta, p.96 ). The folk-tales in Homer are mainly to be found in Odyssus's story of his adventures narrated in Alkinoos Court.<sup>2</sup> The tales of Cyclops, Polyphemos and Laistragones introduce widespread stories of cannibalistic monsters. There are similar folk-tale elements in *Mbh.* also. When the Pandavas were living in disguise at Ekachakrapur in the house of a brahmin, one day

1. shokatvam apadyata yashya shokah. The student's sanskrit English Dictionary by V. S. Apte. Second Edition, Delhi, 1970, reprint in 1993.  
2. Chadwicks, pp. 90-91.

1. VM. N - 24-62.

2. *Odyssey*, IX-XII.

Kunti heard loud wailing coming from the house of a brahmin, who lived with his wife and daughter. On enquiry she learnt that the city was terrorized by a monster, who had made a compact with the residents of the village that every householder would supply him by turn a member of the family for his food. The wailing came from a brahmin family as it was their turn to provide a member of the family to the monster the next day. Kunti persuaded Bhima to go there instead. When the monster came to consume his prey, Bhima fought a duel with him and killed him after a desperate fight. Sidhanta points out ( p. 97 ) that this story is a variant of Heracles' adventure in rescuing Leomedon's daughter Hesione from a devastating dragon and observes that it is curious that Bhima should resemble Herakles in so many ways. The favourite weapon of both was a club and both depended on their muscle power to get the better of the enemy.

The personnel of the Iliad consists of almost wholly of princes and their military followers. The latter themselves sometimes belong to the princely families, as in the case of Achilles' followers, Patrocles and Phoenix. The few remaining persons include several priests such as Chrysis, Dares and Dolpion and seers such as Calchas and Helenos; but some of these are also of princely birth. In the Odyssey the range is somewhat wider; Penelop's suitors are said to be of princely rank which shows that the princely class was very numerous. Besides these we find priests, minstrels and heralds ( Sidhanta, p. 64 ). Taking the evidence of the two poems as a whole, it may be said that the interest is concentrated chiefly upon persons of princely rank and their household and even the servants come in for a share of notice. But the merchant, the farmer and the artisan are practically ignored. There are only occasional references to persons engaged in agriculture and handicrafts. In Odyssey the range is somewhat wider. Apart from the numerous members of the princely classes, other persons such as Phaecean athletes, priests, minstrels, merchants and servants of princely families also find a mention therein. In Beowulf all persons mentioned

by name, whether in the main action or the episodes appear to be members of royal families or military retinue of the princes.

The interest in heroic poetry is centred in an individual hero. In almost every story there is one character whose adventures form the chief object of interest. The nationality or race of the hero, is of no importance, and the sympathy of the reader is enlisted on the side to which he belongs. This sympathy, however, does not lead to the portrayal of the adversaries in a bad light. In the Iliad the army of the Acheans consists wholly of Greek forces, whereas the Trojan army is drawn from foreigners. It is, therefore, not surprising that the story is told from the Achean point of view. However, the treatment given to Trojans is often far from unsympathetic. Indeed to the modern reader, Hector is a far more attractive figure than any of the Achean heroes. Yet the sympathies of the poem are clearly on the side of the Achaeans, though curiously enough it is not mentioned that the Trojans are foreigners.<sup>1</sup> The leading heroes come from widely different regions and several of them from regions which were quite unimportant in historical times. All of them are represented as distinguishing themselves in feats of arms in some portion or other of Iliad; the rank and file count for nothing in the fight.

#### I.

The Bharata of Vaishampayana also shows this feature which is associated with heroic poetry. The Bharata war arose as Kauravas refused to restore the kingdom of the Pandavas after their return from forest exile. The interest in the main story is centred on the actions of the heroes and the national or tribal interest is rarely prominent, although the heroes belong to different tribes. Many tribes had extended their help to either side and it was the personal relation which was a decisive factor in determining the alliances such as loyalty, marriage ties and friendships. Because of their loyalty to the throne of Hastinapur,

1. Chadwicks, pp. - 81, 83.

Bhishma, Drona and Karna fought on the side of the Kauravas, while marriage ties induced Shakuni and Jayadratha to join the Kauravas and Drupada and Virata to join the Pandavas. Karna and Ashvatthama fought on the side of the Kauravas because of their friendship with Duryodhana, while the Vrishni heroes Krishna and Satyaki joined the Pandavas as they were friends of Arjuna. As regards the duration of the Bharata war, the parts of the story dealing with the war proper belong to the five parvas VI to IX and the war took place and concluded in eighteen days.

The Anglo-saxon tradition is different from the Greek tradition in that it brings the same person in contact with heroes of different ages and makes them actors in the same story. Sidhanta observes as follows : " In these cases, as in other stories dealing with the far past, the invention of the poet colours old myths and folk-tales. It is doubtful if he ever made up a whole story or created characters of flesh and blood out of his imagination. In his treatment of the main stories, he may introduce fictitious details or pervert the order of facts, but he is never purely a maker. While the Greek tradition may bring the same person in contact with heroes of different ages, it does not introduce these heroes as actors in the same story. Sidhanta says that the Anglo-saxon tradition is different from Greek tradition and introduces such heroes in the same story. In the Mbh. too later bards such as Suta and Sauti have added the legends of Bhargava Rama, who was a historical figure in Vedic times. Bhargava Rama is mentioned in the Rigveda ( X.10 ) as a Vedic seer and composer of Vedic hymns. The Atharvaveda ( V.18 ) also mentions briefly the conflict between him and the Haihaya king Kartavirya. Although he was separated from the epic heroes by one or two epochs, Sauti brings him into direct contact with the epic characters, especially Bhishma with whom he crosses swords ( MGG. p. 38 ). Sauti has, however, tried to give verisimilitude to his actions in the epic by making Drona and Karna his pupils. Although Bhargava Rama was a historical figure, his legends as recorded in the two epics are anachronistic, as he was separated from the epic heroes by one

or two epochs. The Bhargava legends are not mentioned here, but briefly mentioned in adhyaya 6 ( Epilogue, part II ) Epic Mythology.

Warfare in one form or another seems to be an essential element rather than an accessory of heroic life. In heroic poetry personal honour and glory are held in high regard and so it is not surprising to find personal wrongs, especially insults and outrages to dignity, among the most prolific sources of strife. Such is the case with the siege of Troy itself and the quarrel between Achilles and Agememnon, which forms the subject of Iliad ( Chadwicks, p. 90 ). Helen, who was one of the most beautiful women in the world, had been married to Menelaus, the king of Sparta, and when Paris, son of Priam, the king of Troy went on a visit there, she fell in love with him and eloped with him. Homer describes in the Iliad the Greek expedition in which Achilles and Agememnon took part to recover Helen. One of the leading heroes on the Greek side in the Trojan war was Odysseus, the king of Ithaca. His wanderings after the fall of Troy are the theme of the epic Odyssey, composed by Homer. After undergoing many surprising adventures, he returned to Ithaca to find that his wife Penelope was plagued by suitors. Disguised as a beggar he made way to his palace. When Penelope came to know of his return, she offered her hand to the suitor, who could string the great bow of Odysseus and hit a certain mark. None of them was able to do it, but Odysseus bent the bow and turned the arrows on the suitors and killed them.

In heroic poetry, the fate of the war too did not depend on the numerical strength and prowess of the armies on both sides, but on the valour of the individual heroes. The fate of the war, as pointed out by Sidhanta, depended on combats between two warriors and bravery of individual heroes was the most important element in the epic. So the chief events in the Iliad of the prolonged war on which our interest is focussed are the hand-to-hand fights between Menelaus and Paris, between Hector and

Petrocles, between Aineias and Diamedias and between Hector and Achilles. In the Beowulf we are mainly concerned with the combat of the hero with the monster Grendel and the dragon. However, our prime interest is focussed on the adventures of Odysseus and his fight with suitors of his wife Penelope. So the outcome of the Bharata war too did not depend on the rout of one division by another, but on the slaying of Bhishma and Karna by Arjuna, of Drona by Dhrishtadyumna, of Shalya by Yudhishthira and finally of Duryodhana by Bhima. So the Bharata war too came to an end with the deaths of all the Kaurava generals and finally of Duryodhana.

Sidhanta points out that although the heroic poetry started with a 'historical basis' about 'contemporaneous events', 'successive generations of bards played on it and added elements which can by no means be termed historical.' Such elements are present in the Iliad and the Odyssey, in Beowulf and also the Mbh. These may take different forms, the gods may come down to take an active part in the war or they may appear as rivals for the love of earthly maidens. Very frequently gods are present during the fighting, though it is only on rare occasions, as in Iliad (V. 842 ff) that they actually strike a blow. In this passage Diomedes wounds Aras with the help of goddess Athens. More often they merely exhort their favourites and advise them to employ various stratagems so as to place their opponents at a disadvantage. In Book iii, Aphrodite rescued Paris from the hands of Menelaos. Such combats go to prove the superhuman vigour of the heroes. Sidhanta further goes on to state that these instances must be distinguished from those of Books viii and xiv. In the latter the heroes gain the victory through the help of the gods, who do not take an active part in the war. Such instances tend to deprecate their valour, for their victory is now explained as due to the over-riding will of the gods. Thus these instances are due to the religiosity of the poet, but not of his hero-worship. (Sidhanta, p. 92).

In the Mbh. we find gods playing all these different parts.

In Aranyaka, Arjuna had an encounter with Lord Shiva and when he had the worst of the fight he began to worship Shiva to gain victory and later he came to know that his opponent was the god himself. Sidhanta observes that this is not the super-divine heroism, which we are accustomed to expect in the epic hero. The Nala story (III.65) tells us how four gods, Indra, Agni, Yama and Varuna, wanting to win Damayanti went to the Svayamvara ceremony in the guise of Nala and she had to invoke their compassion by telling them of her strong love for Nala and finally persuaded them to reveal their proper forms, so that she could choose Nala. A similar situation is described in III.65, in which the two Ashvins, divine physicians, fell in love with Sukanya, the daughter of King Sharyati, after seeing her. She was already married to sage Chyavana, who was old and decrepit. The gods proposed to her that they would renew the youth of Chyavana and give him a divine form, if he took a dip in the lake and that if she could identify him she would continue to live with him thereafter, but if she failed, she had to leave him and go with one of them. She was able to make the right choice because of her deep attachment to her husband.

While the epic scholars agree that the invention of characters and incidents are essential to heroic poetry, they raise the question as to what extent this is permissible. In the Homeric poems monsters figure little in Iliad, but they appear in Odyssey. The adventures of Cyclops narrated in Book IX in Odyssey is derived from a widespread folktale and so are the adventures in the following books IX-XII, especially the incident with Circe. But as Sidhanta points out, the hero overcomes his difficulties not by his valour or resourcefulness, but by the guidance of superior powers. There are no such folktales in the original Ramayana of Valmiki, who describes the rakshasas as ordinary cultured human beings. They are only dubbed as man-eating monsters by Suta and Sauti by making additions in the fifth century B.C. They have also shown Ravana as a ten-headed demon and Sauti relates his licentious

behaviour such as his assault on Vedavati ( 7.17 ), his abduction of beautiful girls and married women and his rape of Rambha ( 7.24-26 ) in order to show him as a debauchee. He further adds that the rape of Rambha resulted in a curse by her betrothed Nalakuber ( 7.26 ), which prevented him from molesting Sita. Harivamshakara, however, gives a different reason for Ravana's conduct towards Sita. He says that though Ravana pressed his suit, he gave her the following assurance : " Even then, O Maithilee, I shall not touch you, so long as you do not desire me ( akamam ). Thus though he was relentless in gratifying his desires ( kama ) and acquiring wealth ( artha ), through conquests, he was not a viciously sensuous person as he has been made out to be by Sauti.

Chadwicks observe ( p. 223 ) that the story of penelope's condition that she would marry a suitor who strings the bow has oriental rather than Greek affinities and cites the description of Draupadi's Svayamvara in the Mbh. as a curious parallel. Vaishampayana, however, does not state in the Bharata that Arjuna won Draupadi by stringing the bow. This story occurs in the adhyayas 174-189 added by Suta ( fifth century B. C. ) to the Adiparva in the Mbh. ( MGG. p. 157 ). The story of Syayamvara of Sita in which Rama strings the bow of Shiva and breaks it while doing so also occurs in the Ramayana ( 1.66 ) and this too has been added by Suta. As Homer's time has been fixed as 1200 B. C. - 800 B. C., it is more likely that Suta has borrowed these stories from the Odyssey, unless it can be shown that the book XXI of the Odyssey has been added to it later.

Some passages in Homer emphasize the inevitability of death. Sidhanta observes : ' This idea is closely associated with fatalism on the part of the heroes, an emphasis on destiny as ruling the course of human events ' Again and again, we come across this idea in Homer. Thus Iliad VI. 486 has : no man against my fate shall hurl me to Hades; only Destiny. I wean, no man hath escaped it, be he coward or valiant'.

The thirst for fame seems to have been a predominant

characteristic of the Greek hero and the prospect of glory after death seems to have been the greatest inducement for him to excel in fight. It is in the prospect of undying fame that Achilles finds consolation in Iliad ix : " If I abide here and besiege the Trojan city, then my returning home is taken from me; but my fame shall be imperishable. But if I go home to my native land, my high fame is taken from me. " The same thirst for fame is prominent in Hector's speech to Aias<sup>1</sup> and Agamemnon's description of the honours paid to Achilles<sup>2</sup> In both instances, a splendid grave mound on the sea-shore is thought to be a fitting memorial to a dead hero, as such a monument will be seen from afar and remind people of the worth of the hero. The same idea comes out in Beowulf's desire for a splendid grave-chamber where the head-land jets into the sea.<sup>3</sup> Some of the passages lay emphasis on the inevitability of death and destiny as ruling the course of human events. Again and again this idea occurs in Homer.<sup>4</sup> In Odyssey ( vii. 196 ff. ), Odysseus speaks of fate and the spinning women who settle the destinies of men. With this we may compare Bharata ( IX. 5.29 ) " Fame is all that one should acquire here. That fame can be acquired by battle and by no other means. " As stated by Sidhanta ( p. 82 ), ' death on the battlefield is always regarded as the fitting end of a kshatriya, but the prospect of fame through such a death is not always brought out. The point made out by Suta ( XI. 2.14 ) is very much to the point; ' He who is slain in battle attains heaven and he who slays his enemy acquires fame. ' so that in either case it redounds to the glory of the hero. The Bharata also repeatedly emphasizes the force of destiny. ' Human effort can never overcome Destiny. ' ( VI.124 ) and in a moment of dejection one goes even so far as to say, ' I think Destiny is more powerful than exertion. ' ( VII.19 ).

1. Iliad, VII. 85 ff.

2. Odessey, XXIV.80 ff.

3. Beowulf, 2802 ff.

4. Iliad, VI 486 ff.

Again in the heroic epic oral transmission is very prominent. Speeches are constantly introduced in a set form, the same formula being repeated over and over again. This would seem to indicate that the epic author attached more importance to the speakers and recorded their speeches only in a formal way. The speeches are of frequent occurrence in heroic poems and are of considerable length. The spaces allotted to the speeches varies a great deal from one-third to four-fifths; but in both the Greek epics the total quantity of speeches exceeds that of the narratives. Among the speech poems they are of two different types, one dealing with situations or emotions and a type predominantly of a didactic nature.<sup>1</sup> Further in regard to form, there is in both the Greek and Teutonic poems, an unbroken flow of verse. The Greek epics are composed in one metre, the hexameter, which is generally governed by quantity without regard to accent. The metre of the Teutonic poetry is governed by quantity as well as accent, the former being regarded only in accented syllables. In some unaccented portions the syllables may vary considerably. The Teutonic poems may also disclose alliteration which is unknown in Greek poetry. Vaishampayana has composed his Bharata in anushtubh and tristubh metres, which are also to be found in Vedic texts. In the Mbh. Vaidya states ( p. 64 ) that the stanzas therein comprise 95 percent anushtubhs, a little less than 5 per cent tristubhs and 0.2 per cent other metres.

Among the accessories of heroic life, the feeling of pride is quite common among the heroes of the epics in their prowess, and noble lineage.<sup>2</sup> The former often takes the form of boasting and the heroes are not ashamed to brag of their heroic deeds and to proclaim them in the public. Thus Hector exults over the dying Patroklos<sup>3</sup> " Surely thou saidst that thou would sack my town and from Trojan women take away the day of freedom and

1. Ibid, pp. 21-28.

2. Lineage, Sidhanta, p. 86.

3. Iliad, XVI 830 ff.

bring them to thine own country; fool ! Nay in front of these were the swift horses of Hector straining their speed for the fight, and myself wielding the spear among the war loving Trojans, even I who ward from them the day of Destiny." Again Diomedes addressed Paris thus.<sup>1</sup> " Feeble is the dart of craven man and worthless. In otherwise from my hand, yea, if it do but touch, the sharp shaft flieth and straightway layeth low its man, and torn are the cheeks of his wife and fatherless his children."

The Indian heroes too were not behind in bragging. In Udyogaparva ( SM.V.160 ) Arjuna boasts about his prowess and is confident of slaying single-handed all the Karurva heroes. Karna too vaunts his prowess and skill and appears confident of slaying Arjuna with his special arrow which can penetrate the mountain and which he will not discharge against any but Arjuna. Further in V.163 also added by Suta, Bhima boasts of his strength and is confident of killing single-handed all Kaurava heroes. It is true that Ashvatthama says in Dronaparva : " An Arya i. e. noble person should not sound his own praises." But it has been pointed out that no warrior excels Ashvatthama in actual boasting ( Sidhanta, 86 ).

As we saw before, the wars as described in Greek heroic poetry are not so much the fights between armies, but resolve themselves into the combats of individual heroes on whose prowess the fate of the war seems to depend. The absence of a hero like Achilles means disaster for his side and his return implies discomfiture for the foes. So the interest in the Bharata war too was focussed on the battles of individual heroes and the issue of the battle, as Sidhanta points out ( p. 76 ), depended not so much on the clash of the whole armies as on single combats between great warriors on both sides. In the Bharata war the death of Ghatotkaca is regarded as a great disaster by the

1. Ibid, XI, 388 ff.

Pandavas, while the fact that he slew before dying the enemy's entire division did not seem to be worth exultation. In the Bharata war there were great warriors on both sides. Bhishma, Karna and Arjuna were great archers, Bhima and Duryodhana were superb mace-fighters and some warriors were effective swordsmen. However, as the rules of the war required that a warrior should fight with the same weapons as his adversary, or if he lost the weapon, he had to fight with his hands and fists and so he had to train himself as a versatile warrior (*citrayodhi*). So the outcome of the Bharata war did not depend on the rout of one division by another, but on the defeat of Bhishma by Arjuna, slaying of Drona by Dhrishtadyumna, of Karna by Arjuna, of Shalya by Yudhishthira and finally of Duryodhana by Bhima. So the Bharata war came to an end with the deaths of all the Kaurava generals and finally the death of Duryodhana.

One can, therefore, claim that the core of the *Mbh.*, which is the Bharata of *Vaishampayana*, follows the same heroic standards and belongs to the same family of heroic poetry as *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Siddhanta also admits ( p. 88 ) that the styles are similar and the sentiments are mostly the same. The interest of this work lies in the heroic deeds of heroes and not the fortunes of nations or tribes. Warriors such as Bhishma, Drona, Karna and Jayadratha in the Kaurava camp and Arjuna, Bhima and Ghatotkaca, Abhimanyu in the Pandava camp perform heroic feats on the battle-field. It is true that the chief prince in this epic is not sufficiently heroic; but then Paris in the *Iliad* is equally bad and one may compare the fights of Yudhishthira and Drona with Kritavarma (*Dronaparva*) with that of Paris and Menelaos in *Iliad* Bk. III ( Siddhanta, p. 88 ). However, it must be pointed out that though Yudhishthira did not have the level of heroism attained by Bhima and Arjuna, he was heroic enough to kill in an open combat Shalya, the last general of the Kauravas. Most of the unheroic elements which are stated by Siddhanta appear not in the *Vaishampayana* text but only in the

additions made by later redactors.

Express statements of social standards rarely occur in Greek heroic poetry; but they are quite frequent in *Beowulf* ( Chadwick, p. 75 ). In single combats whether they take place in the course of general engagements or arise from private feuds, the heroes are all expected to show chivalrous spirit and not take advantage of any disability on the part of the opponent, importance being attached to personal honour and fair play. According to the English evidence, the cardinal virtues of a hero are courage, loyalty and generosity. Courage seems to be bound up with his physical strength; his loyalty is purely personal to his relations and his personal followers, especially in his treatment of minstrels. The vices which receive censure are the antithesis of the above-mentioned virtues, namely cowardice, disloyalty and meanness. They also include avarice, arrogance, violence towards own households and disregard of oaths. Heramod's undoing was due to his meanness and violence towards his followers ( 1718 ff ). We also come across in some passages which refer to a different set of standards of a definitely christian character. In *Beowulf* ( 2864 ff ). Wiglaf bitterly reproaches Beowulf's followers for deserting him in the hour of danger.

As regards the pride in one's lineage, Aineias speaks to Achilles about their respective families before they start fighting. " We know each other's race and lineage in that we have heard the fame proclaimed by mortal men, but never hast thou set eyes on my parents nor I on thine. Thou, they say, art the son of noble Peleus and of Thetis of fair tresses, the daughter of the sea; the sire I boast of is Anchises, great of heart and my mother is Aphrodite... and he traces his lineage to Zeus, the cloudgatherer. This feeling of pride in one's family is more clearly shown when it is threatened with extinction. For instance in *Odyssey*, ( XN-180 ff. ) Eumeios fears the fate of Odysseus on his return home, " Now the lordly wooers lie in wait for him on his way home,

that the race of god-like Arkesios may perish nameless out of Ithaca.<sup>1</sup> The Indian practice is the same as is seen when Karna challenges Arjuna to a duel, their former tutor Kripa wants to know Karna's lineage.<sup>2</sup> He says, "This is the son of Pandu, the youngest child of Kunti, he is a Kuru and will engage in a single combat with you. But O mighty-armed hero, you should tell us your ancestry, the lineage of your father and mother and the royal family of which you are an ornament." Arjuna did not fight with him, when he came to know that he did not belong to a royal family. In the Mbh. the necessity of the continuance of the family is recognised, but is given a spiritual purpose, for spiritual offerings are necessary for the continuance of the Manes in heaven. Sidhanta, however, remarks that this may well be an interpolation of post-heroic times, but it may be pointed out that the samskara of marriage has been held to be necessary for the procreation of sons for this purpose from Vedic times.

One of the chief characteristics of heroic tradition is the belief in the supernatural birth of the heroes, which appears to be of unhistorical character. This is common in the Greek and Anglo-saxon tradition. The leading characters in the Greek epics are said to be children of deities. Sarpedon is a son and Helen a daughter of Zeus. Acias is a son of Aphrodite and Achilles of a mermaid (Nereut) Thetis. Monsters figure little in Iliad, but they appear in Odysseus' account of adventures (Odysseus, ix, xii).<sup>3</sup> The arms of Agamemnon and the shield of Achilles made by god Hephaestus are also described in the Iliad and so are those borne by Beowulf on his visit to the monster's den. Descriptions of works of art are not common, but are occasionally given in great detail. For instance, the description of the shield of Achilles gives an elaborate account of the design worked on it. Vaishampayana, however, describes the Bharata heroes including Krishna as human. It is only in the Mbh. that devinity is ascribed

1. Sidhanta, pp. 86 - 87.
2. SM.+26.30ff
3. Chadwicks, 245.

to Krishna. In the Mbh. also Bhishma is said to be the son of the river goddess Ganga and through the curse of Animandavya, Dharma, the god of justice was born as Vidura. Yudhishtira is said to be the son of Dharma, the god of justice, Bhima of Vayu, the wind-god, Arjuna of Indra, the Lord of heaven and Nakula and Sahadeva as the sons of the two Ashvins, the divine physicians. This attribution of divine origin is natural in an attempt to glorify the prowess of the heroes, for their strength has a touch of divinity in it. The legends connected with their births will be told in Epic Mythology.

In the heroic epics we generally do not get references to the descendants of main characters, even descendants who played a part in the history of later times. They also do not show any interest in their ancestors, though the eleventh book of Odyssey introduces some heroes of the past. In the Bharata of Vaishampayana also the work is supposed to have been recited at the court of Janamejaya, the great grand-son of Arjuna. Yet in the epic itself no one later than Abhimanyu, son of Arjuna, had taken a leading part in the war. The birth of Abhimanyu's son Parikshita finds a cursory mention in the epic. Ancestors beyond Bhishma do not figure in the main story of the war, but find a mention in the episodes which are later accretions to the Vaishampayana text. Chadwicks (199) point out that incidents and situations in conflict with good historical evidence occur frequently in the later German and Norman versions of Teutonic heroic poems. The additions made by Suta and Sauti to absolve the Pandavas of the breaches of the rules of war are instances of this kind.

Further in regard to form, in both Greek and Teutonic poems, there is an unbroken flow of verse. The Greek epics are composed in one metre, the hexameter, which is governed by quantity, without regard to accent. The metre of the Teutonic poems is governed by accent as well as quantity, the latter being counted only in accented syllables. In certain unaccented positions the number of syllables may vary considerably. The Teutonic

poems are governed also by alliteration, which is unknown in Greek<sup>1</sup> Both the Indian epics have used anustubh and tristubh metres, which are also to be found in Vedic literature Vaidya ( p. 64 ) has stated that the stanzas in the Mbh. comprise of 95 per cent Anustubhs, of a little less than 5 percent Tristubhs and of .02 percent of other metres. The latter consist of long metre stanzas such as rathoddhata and shardulavikridita and stanzas based on metres such as pushpitagra, aparavaktra, matrasamaka, and aaryaa, which are not Vedic metres. The latter have been used by later redactors Suta and Sauti and so they must have come into vogue before the 5th century B. C. This is also confirmed by the fact that the aaryaa metre is found in the ancient Buddhist and Jain literature.

As Chadwicks observe (p. 229), the invention of incidents is essential to heroic narrative poetry, and indeed probably to almost all kinds of narrative poetry. Such incidents as meetings and conversations are doubtless invented everywhere and in the accounts of combats between the warriors, there is invention of a good deal of fighting. The epic poet is not a mere historian who records historical events as they happened. Though he adheres more or less to the facts which he knows, as a poet he fills in the details which will redound to the glory of the heroes. Incidents such as meetings and conversations are doubtless invented everywhere, and in poems relating to warfare like the Iliad, we have to make allowance for a good deal of fighting. The only question is to what extent this is permissible.

Valmiki seems to have recorded a fairly true picture of the Ramayana war, including the types of weapons used by both the parties. But there seems to have been a good deal of exaggeration in Vaishampayana's description of the battles, including the types of weapons used and the sizes of the armies. The many accounts of the contents in which the warriors are

said to have discharged showers of arrows which clouded the sky are due to hyperbole ( atishayokti ), which is a figure of speech. That the supply of arrows was limited to achieve this is clear from the fact that they were stacked in the front portion of the chariot ( MGG, p. 105 ). Further the modern reader is apt to feel that the epic poet could have avoided the miraculous elements such as the use of the astras, which could produce fire, rain, stupour etc. or the magical devices employed by the demon warriors such as Ghatotkacha and Alambus.

Full descriptions of even familiar occurrences is a marked feature of the Homeric poems and Beowulf. Typical examples may be found in the descriptions of the arrival and receptions of visitors, e.g. of Telemachos and Peisistratos at the court of Menelaos<sup>1</sup> and that of Beowulf at the court of Hrothgar.<sup>2</sup> Other instances of the same leisurely type of narrative in prose, occur in accounts of the royal personages in their palaces.<sup>3</sup> The stages in the arrival and reception of visitors are generally described with great elaboration. " The arrival of Telemachos and the disguised Pallas Athene at the court of Nestor may be taken as an illustration. They came to the gathering and session of the men of Pylos. There was Nestor seated with his sons and round him his company making ready the feast and roasting some of the flesh and splitting other. Now when they saw the strangers, they went all together and clasped their hands in welcome, and would have them sit down. First Peisistratos, son of Nestor, drew nigh, and took the hands of each and made them sit down at the feast on soft fleeces upon the sea-sand, beside his brother Thracymedes and his father. And he gave them messes of the inner meat and poured wine into a golden cup and pledging her, he spake unto Pallas Athene.... Therewith he placed in her hand the cup of sweet wine.... And she gave Telemachos the fair two-handled cup. " ( Sidhanta, pp. 78 ).

1. Odessey, N. 20 ff.

2. Beowulf, 325 ff.

3. Odessey, 328 ff., Beowulf, 920 ff.

With this we may compare the arrival of Draupadi at her svayamvara ( self-choice of a husband by the bride herself ) and the return of the Pandavas to Hastinapura after their marriage. Prince Dhrishtadyumna rode on horse-back in front of his sister Draupadi seated on an elephant. Fresh from her bridal bath and clad in her beautiful clothes, she entered the hall, seeming to fill it with the sweetness of her presence and perfect beauty with garland in her hand and coyly glancing at the valiant suitors, who for their part looked at her in speechless admiration. After she ascended the dais, the brahmins repeated the usual mantras and offered oblations in the fire. After the peace invocation had been started and the flourish of music had stopped, Dhrishtadyumna took his sister by hand and led her to the centre of the hall.

There are also comparable passages in the Beowulf and the Mbh. which describe scenes where friends are given farewell. There is the scene of Hrothgar's farewell to Beowulf ( 1870 ff. ) : " Then did the king of noble lineage ...kiss that best of squires and clasp him round the neck. Tears fell from him as he stood there with his grey hair, Aged ane venerable as he was, he felt uncertain, indeed he thought it unlikely that they would ever meet again in spirited converse. So dear was this man to him that he could not restrain his heart's emotion but in his breast, fast bound within his heart, a secret longing for the beloved man burnt in his blood." With this we may compare a scene of farewell in the Mbh.<sup>1</sup> where Yudhisthira bid farewell to all the friends and relatives of the Kurus. Vidura persuaded him to leave his mother behind and hoped to see him return in safety and crowned with success. " Then when Draupadi was about to start, she went to Kunti and prayed for permission to depart. She asked her and the other ladies ( of the royal household ), who were all plunged in grief; after saluting and embracing each one of them, she expressed her desire to leave. Thereupon loud

lamentations were heard from within the inner apartment of the Pandavas. Kunti was greatly afflicted on seeing Draupadi about to start on her journey and spoke to her in a voice choked with grief. " ( Sidhanta, pp. 79-80 ).

The heroic poetry tends to be descriptive poetry of places, kings' dwellings and works of art. The palaces of Menelaos and of Hrothgar are described as being of unusual splendour, but there is no mention of any special or distinctive or express statements of social standards which are of rare occurrence in Greek heroic poetry and saga ( Chadwicks, p. 75 ). In the dual combats, whether they take place in the course of general engagements or arise from personal feuds, the heroes are usually expected to show chivalrous spirit and not take advantage of any disability on the part of the opponent. More importance was attached to personal honour and fair play. In the Mbh. too Vaishampayana lays down the code of war<sup>1</sup> as follows : " To slay a non-combatant as also an unarmed person, O Bharata, or one who is in flight or of one who has sought protection or of one who has surrendered with folded hands is not countenanced by the wise." While the Kauravas have made attempts to get rid of the Pandavas, the latter are also not entirely blameless. It is difficult to defend the subterfuges employed by the Pandavas to kill Bhishma, Drona, Karna and Duryodhana. While Vaishampayana has made no direct attempt to defend the subterfuges employed by the Pandavas, he states his definite view that the victory of the Pandavas was the triumph of righteousness, *yato dharmas tato jayah*. Evidently he thought that the actions of the Pandavas came within the definition of apaddharma, as they were committed for self-preservation. The Bhargava sage Shaunaka, however, seems to have thought that the apaddharma was not sufficient to cover the subterfuges employed by the Pandavas to get rid of the great Kaurava heroes and persuaded Sauti to invent incidents such as disrobing of Draupadi to justify them.

1. SR - II, 69-70.

1. VM. II.49-22.

To conclude one can, therefore, claim that the core of the Mbh. which is the Bharata of Vaishampayana follows the same heroic standards and forms of heroic poetry as Illiad and Odyssey. Sidhanta ( p. 88 ) also admits that the styles are similar and the sentiments are mostly the same. The interest of this work lies in the daring deeds of heroes and not in the fortune of nations or tribes.

As stated by Sidhanta ( pp. 87-88 ), most of the unheroic elements in the Mbh. appear in the additions made by later redactors Suta and Sauti. Personal insults and outrages to honour, which played a part in provoking the war, occur in the story of Draupadi's being dragged to the assembly hall in a half-clad condition after Yudhishtira staked her and lost in the dice game ( Sabhaparva ) and the ghoshayatra and Draupadi's abduction by Jayadratha ( Aranyakaparva ), which have been added later by Suta and Sauti. In heroic poetry and saga one meets almost everywhere incidents and scenes, which appear to be of an unhistorical character. Incidents and situations, which are in conflict with good historical evidence also occur frequently in the later German and Norman versions of the Teutonic heroic poems ( Chadwicks, p. 199 ).

Thus the Bharata of Vaishampayana, which it has been possible to retrieve by the statistical method; is merely a chronicle of the Bharata war and exhibits all the elements of heroic poetry. But had it remained so in the words of Sukthankar, it would have passed into the limbo of oblivion like the epic of Gilgamesha. In its expanded form, however, it underwent a sea change and became a miscellany of mythology, politics, theology and philosophy. It is now cherished by all Hindus as a cultural heritage, as it contains a record of the social, political, religious and cultural changes that took place in Aryavarta in the first millenium B. C. Moreover with the incorporation of the dharma and niti elements in it, it has become an object of veneration as a smriti text or even as the fifth ( panchama ) Veda.

## ( Part II )

Dedicated to

Late Dr. S. K. Bedekar

Adhyaya - 11

## VEDIC ANTECEDENTS

The most ancient religious literature in India comprises the Vedas, which Gonda aptly describes as 'one of the most original and interesting production of human endeavour.' Traditionally the Vedas are held to be apaurushya i.e. not of human origin. The Brih. Up. ( II.4 ) declares that the Vedas are like the breath of the infinite being. This belief in the divine and impersonal character of the Vedas has invested them with great sanctity and authority. Various attempts have been made to give a rational meaning to this apaurushyta of the Vedas, but they need not detain us here. We must however, take note of the fact that this belief has formed the basis of both the religious thought and the social structure of the Hindus for countless generations even upto the present time. The Vedas are held to be eternal and infallible and scriptural authority has become the canon for the acceptability of a religious or philosophical doctrine. Thus Badarayana rejected the Sankhya doctrine of pradhana as the independent cause of the material world by calling it un-Vedic.<sup>1</sup> This extreme regard for scriptural authority had an unintended but undesirable result in that later thinkers had to show considerable ingenuity in demonstrating that their own contributions to religious or philosophic thought was really based on the Vedas.

1. ashabdam, Brahmasutra 1.1.5

The term Veda literally means 'knowledge' and it is used in the plural to denote four different types of collections namely hymns of praise to deities ( Rigveda ), of sacrificial formulae ( Yajurveda ), of chants sung to certain fixed melodies ( Samaveda ) and the Atharvaveda comprising among others magical spells. The last received recognition only at a later date as the Gita mentions only three Vedas, trayidharma ( ix.21 ) and the knowers of the three vedas ( ix.20 ).

In the Vedic period we come across two streams of thought bearing upon religion and philosophy, which may be broadly called liturgical and metaphysical. The former consists of (1) samhitas or collections of hymns, (2) Brahmanas which are prose works which deal with sacrificial rites and ceremonies, (3) Aranyakas, speculations of hermits living in forests and (4) Upanishads which are philosophical texts dealing with the central meaning of life. This classification is, however, not exclusive but merely indicative of two broad tendencies, according as the emphasis is placed on ritual duties or on ethical conduct and spiritual practices.

The Brahmanas were mainly occupied with Shrauta or Vedic sacrifices. We, however, get some stray references in them to sacraments. A fragmentary account of upanayana is found in the Gopatha Brahmana ( I.2 ). The Shat. Brahmana gives an account of it and uses the word brhamacarya to describe the life of a Vedic student ( XI.3 ). It also uses the word antevasi to denote a student living with a teacher and the word ajina, deer skin, worn by a hermit. It also deals with upanayana, the initiation of a vedic student, the daily vedic study and the death ceremonies. The Tandya Brahmana refers to the Vratyastoma sacrifices through which the Vratyas were reclaimed to the Aryan fold. The vratya was an outcaste or a member of three classes who had lost his class owing to the non-performance of principal samskaras or purificatory rites ( especially investiture of the sacred thread ).

Both Indra and sage Angiras find a prominent mention in

Rigveda ( X.14.6 ) in which both are identified with the cult of sacrifice. Indra's greatness is celebrated in about 250 hymns of Rigveda, which forms nearly one-fourth of the corpus and he is said to be the leader - nay the very soul of sacrifice.<sup>1</sup> The Vedic gods are closely connected with the ritual system of which they form an integral part. The word Angiras occurs about fifty times in Rigveda and most of the prominent seers with two exceptions belong in one way or another to the Angiras family. The two exceptions are Gritsamada of Mandala II and Vasishtha of Mandale VII. Gritsamada was the son of Bhargava Vitahaya, who when defeated by Pratardana, son of Divodas, took shelter in the hermitage of Bhrigu and embraced the profession of a brahmin ( Mbh.XII.31, Sauti ). The Gritsamadas were originally devotees of Varuna and also of Rudra ( RV.II.33 ), but later became the enthusiastic supporters of Indra cult. ( RV.II.22 ). We find further one of the Gritsamadas imploring Varuna ( RV.II.28 ) that he should not be made to suffer for his or another's sin. Probably he refers to the sin committed by him or his ancestor by transferring his loyalty from Varuna to Indra. Vasishtha too who was the son of Mitravaruna, ( RV.VII.33 ) became the priest and supporter of the Vedic Aryan king Sudas and helped him to win victory over the ten kings in Dasharajna war. He ascribes his later misfortunes to the wrath of Varuna and bewails the fact that his kinship with Varuna had come to an end ( RV.VII.88 ). Generally one may say that the Angirasas identified themselves with the Indra cult and made important contributions to the Vedic Sacrifice.

The Western scholars are critical of Hindu religion ( dharma ) on two counts. Firstly they point out that it is mainly concerned with the religious duties to be performed by the four classes ( Varna ) in different stages of life ( ashrama ) and does not deal adequately with the ethical values which should govern human conduct. Secondly they say that the authors of

<sup>1</sup> ShB. IX.5.1.33

Dharmashastra do not show sufficient awareness of one's social service to the not-so-well-to-do families and other creatures as an important element of moral conduct. As regards the first, the most ancient texts of the Hindus are the three Vedas, Rigveda, Yajurveda and Samaveda, which are collectively called the *Trayi* 'the sacred triad'. The vedas consist of hymns addressed to various deities (mantra portion) and of the Brahmanas which state the rules for the employment of the hymns at the various sacrifices and their origin with detailed explanations with sometimes lengthy illustrations. The upanishadas are the mystical portions attached to the Brahmanas which tried to ascertain the secret meaning of the Vedas.

We find that even the Vedas, with all their emphasis on sacrificial rites, have laid stress on moral values. The sublime concept of rita in the Rigveda conceived the world as a moral order, which presages the later doctrine of truth.<sup>1</sup> In the Tai. Up. (I.2), when the student was ready to leave the teacher's house after completion of his Vedic study, the teacher exhorted him to speak the truth and practise dharma (Tai. Up. 1.2). The Brih. Up. also says that one should inculcate in the minds of persons three cardinal virtues, viz. self-restraint, compassion to all living creatures and charity. This description is however, not exclusive, but merely indicative of two broad tendencies according as the emphasis is placed on ritual works or on ethical and spiritual practices.

According to Shri. Shabara<sup>2</sup> the obvious purport of the Vedas is to impart to us knowledge about our duties and to lay down injunctions about the performance of such duties. The Sanskrit equivalent of duty is dharma, which has undergone changes of meaning in the Vedic and Sutra period. In Rigveda it means mostly 'religious ordinances and rites' and in some cases, 'the merit acquired in performing them'. In the Ait. Br.

1. RV.I.1.1-5

2. His Bhasya on Jaimini Sutra I. 1. 1.

it has been used in the sense of 'the whole body of religious rites.' In the Sutra period it came to mean first the varnadharma i.e. duties cast upon a person according to his class and much later it included the duties cast upon him according to his stage of life, ashramadharma.

The cult of sacrifice had become well established in the time of the Brahmanas, which have exalted it as duty par excellence, shreshthama karma<sup>1</sup> (Shat. Br. I.7, 1.5). Every householder belonging to the first three classes was required to perform sacrifices, which were classified as obligatory and optional. Among the obligatory duties some were to be performed daily (nitya) and some periodically (naimittika). A householder had to perform the agnihotra sacrifice daily morning and evening and offer cow's milk into the sacred fire. This obligatory duty was to be performed throughout a man's life, and failure to do so gave rise to pratyavaya (cf. 11.40) or sin. It was also obligatory upon him to perform some periodical sacrifices such as the darshapurnamaasa sacrifice on the new moon and the full moon days, the Chaturmaasa sacrifices<sup>2</sup> and the Agrayana sacrifices at the harvesting time. A householder was prohibited from eating the newly harvested crop without offering the new grain in the agrayana sacrifice.

In addition there were a number of (kamya) sacrifices, which are to be performed for securing some desired object or benefit, such as rain, long life, safe journey, birth of a son etc. In some Vedic sacrifices the offerings were simple such as melted butter (aajya), boiled rice or barley (charu) and rice cake (purodasha). These are known as haviryajnas, although in two of them animals were also sacrificed. In others known as Soma sacrifice, the soma brew as well as animals were sacrificed. The latter were much more complicated and spread over longer periods.

1. Cf. yajno vai mahima (shat. Br. III.2.1.8). See also Taitt. Br. III. 2. 14.

2. Sacrifices performed every four months ie at the beginning of Kartika, Phalguna and Ashadha, cf. Apte's dictionary.

There is ample evidence that the sages of the RV were very well acquainted with sacrifice. We come across frequent references to sacred fires, kindling of the ritual fire, officiating priests etc. throughout its corpus.<sup>1</sup> In many of these rites, however, the magical element, based on the concept of sympathetic magic, seems to have been present from the very beginning. The Manduka Sukta (RV.VII.103), for instance, is not a satire on the priests as Muir and Max Muller thought, but is a rain charm. According to Frazer, the intimate association of frogs and toads with water has earned for these creatures a wide-spread reputation as custodians of rain; and hence they often play a part in charms designed to draw needed showers from the sky.<sup>2</sup> There was also a universal belief among almost all primitive tribes that there is a sympathetic relation between the commerce of the sexes and the fertility of the soil. According to Oldenberg, the relation of the chief queen and horse in the ashvamedha sacrifice is clearly a fertility spell, while the obscene language between the queen and the priests could also be explained in the same way. In regard to the sacrificial rites prescribed in Brahmana literature, Keith pertinently observes "in the vast majority of these cases the nature of the ritual can be solved at once by the application of the concept of sympathetic magic, and this is one of the most obvious and undeniable facts in the whole of the Vedic sacrifice; it is from the beginning to the end full of magical elements."

These magical rites thus seem to have originated in tribal organisations which practised a primitive form of agriculture. There are, however, strong reasons to believe that the Rigvedic people led a pastoral life and did not depend on agriculture. The Rigveda contains very few references to agriculture, and most of them appear in its first and tenth Mandalas, which are admittedly later compositions. On the other hand, the desire for cattle finds an expression practically in every chapter of RV,

1. Jan Gonda, *Vedic Literature (Samhitas and Brahmanas)*, Wiesbaden, 1975, p. 84.

2. James George Frazer : *The Golden Bough*, Abridged Edition, London, 1933, p. 73.

and the exploits of Indra, the war hero and the chief god of the Vedic people are mainly related to the seizing of the cattle of the dasyus, discovering concealed cows and releasing the cows kept in captivity by the panis in the mountain forests. How then did the magical rites based on agriculture find a place in a society, which was by and large pastoral in character? If they were, as is held by Macdonnell, the relic of a distant past, "derived from a much earlier age and afterwards continued throughout the priestly literature of later times", this tradition should have been common literature of later times,<sup>1</sup> and this tradition should have been common to the Aryan tribes living in those days. We shall, however, see later that many Aryan tribes and at least one important priestly clan, namely the Bhrugus, were opposed to this cult of sacrifice. Further in quite a few instances, the desired result of a sacrifice seems to have been far removed from the actual form of the sacrifice. For instance, three important sacrifices, the ashvamedha, the rajasuya and the vaajapeya, which were obviously fertility spells, were used for purposes unconnected with the nature of the ritual. The rajasuya and ashvamedha sacrifices were undertaken for the coronation of a king and for acquisition of suzerainty by him. The vaajapeya then came to be performed as a preliminary rite before undertaking the rajasuya sacrifice.<sup>2</sup> This would lead to the inference that the Vedic seers borrowed these magical rites from the local non-Aryan tribes and by incorporating hymns addressed to the Vedic deities, gave them sophisticated forms. They could now claim that they possessed extraordinary powers by which they could solicit, nay even command, special favours from the gods. Thus the relation between men and the divinities came to be viewed as one of mutual dependence.

In the early days when the Vedic ritual was simple, not only a brahmin but also a prince could offer a sacrifice to the

1. ERE., Vol. VIII, p. 312.

2. N. N. Bhattacharyya, *Ancient Indian Rituals and their Social Contents*, Delhi 1975, pp. 11-12; 49-50.

gods for himself and his people. But with the incorporation of fertility rites the Vedic ritual became elaborate and complicated and so the need was felt of a hieratic order who could devote themselves solely to its performance and to the preservation of its sacred hymnology. Further with the growth of military and administrative responsibilities, the ruling classes had little time for such ceremonies. This development gave rise to two elitist classes, the brahmins and the kshatriyas, whose services now became indispensable for the performance and protection of the sacrifice. From a collective agricultural rite, the ashvamedha became the exclusive privilege of a king, a symbol of royal supremacy. Only a brahmin could now perform the brihaspatisava for the attainment of priestly eminence. A number of optional rites came to be prescribed according to the number of the deities to be propitiated and the number of wants to be satisfied. Sacrificial rites thus came to be devised not only for rain and food but also for progeny, virile power, victory in a battle, prosperity of kinsmen, good fortune and also the general welfare. In addition to these temporal benefits, the sacrifices were supposed to bring religious rewards also such as a place in heaven after death. The heaven was the highest goal to which a sacrificer could aspire and indeed every sacrifice was described as a ship bound heavenwards.<sup>1</sup> This led to the attachment of more importance to the meticulous performance of the ritual rather than to spiritual practices such as Vedic study, austerity and truth.

In course of time, animal sacrifice came under strong condemnation especially by the sankhyas, who quoting the Vedic text 'one should not kill any being', said that it was sinful. The ritualists, on the other hand, maintained that the particular injunction in regard to the killing of an animal in a sacrifice overrode the general injunction about non-killing. Partly as a result of these protests and partly because animals in the meantime had come to be regarded as wealth, there was a

1. tad vai sara eva yajno nauh svargya.

change in the public attitude towards animal sacrifice. Moreover, as stated before, the shrauta rites had become too complicated and time-consuming, and the need was felt for evolving simpler rites which could be performed without the ministrations of a priest.

From ancient times it was an article of faith with the Hindus that a person was born with three debts which he owed to the sages, the gods and the manes, which he could repay by studying the Veda, sacrificing to the gods and begetting sons respectively. To these three debts were added, even as early as the Brahmana period, two more debts, which a person owed to the myriad creatures of the world and his fellow beings. Thus the Shat. Br. speaks of five mahayajnas and describes them by way of praise as the 'great sacrificial sessions'. Of these the devayajna and the pitruyajna could be performed by simply offering a faggot into the fire for the gods and by offering water to the manes. The bhutayajna and manushyayajna consisted in offering food to the living creatures and hospitality to a guest, while the study of the Veda constituted brahmayajna. With the development of compassion for all creatures, there was a universal sentiment against wanton injury to living beings. The five great yajnas, therefore, came to be regarded as an act of expiation for the accidental destruction of life through five household things<sup>1</sup>. In respect of these five mahayajnas, Dr. P.V. Kane observes<sup>2</sup> that the institution was, morally and spiritually, a decided improvement over the shrauta sacrifices, as it was prompted by feelings of devotion, reverence, compassion and fellow feeling.

The architects of the sacrificial cult were known as rishis, the Vedic seers. Sayana describes them by such epithets as atjndriyadrashtarah, mantradrashtarah etc. which would suggest that they 'saw' the hymns and sacrificial formulae in a state of religious ecstasy. The Vedic seers lived a full social life

1. The fire-place, the grind-stone, the broom, the pestle and the mortar and the water pot. See Shri Shankara and Ananda on III. 13  
2. HD. Vol. II. Part I. p. 697.

as householders and discharged their duties both as sacrificers ( yajamanas ) and as officiating priests at the sacrifices ( yajakas ) with exemplary diligence and meticulous attention. The sacrifices were, as mentioned before, performed for temporal aspiration and for a place in heaven. Their compositions bear testimony to their sense of hope, optimism and zest of life. The wife of a sacrificer had a significant role in the sacrificial rites, and so great importance was attached to the gaarhasthyadharma i.e. the order of the householder. There is nothing in the Vedic literature expressly corresponding to vaanaprastha, but we find a reference in RV.X.136.2 to the munis, who are said to be wind-girt and clad in brownish dirty garments. We come across the term muni not infrequently in the Brahmanas, but even there the term seems to apply mostly to householders. The Ait. Br. ( VI.33 ) mentions one householder, Aitasa, as muni. Among the Upanishads, the Brih. Up. ( IV.4.22 ), for the first time, speaks of munis who had renounced the world and lived by begging. References to ascetic life are to be found among the later Upanishadas such as the Katha, the Mundaka and the Jabala. However, even in the Mbh. we find that Mudgala and Asita Devala, who were householders living in hermitages, were called munis. Another hermit clan mentioned in the Vedas and known as yatis, which was associated with the Bhrigus, was totally opposed to the cult of sacrifice, of which more later.

Among the three aims of life ( trivarga ), right conduct dharma has been included as the aim of human life, the other two being kaama sensual enjoyment and artha, economic pursuits. Kaama is the satisfaction of the physical, emotional and artistic life and so is the lowest of the three and only fools regard it as the end of life. In the Gita ( vii.ii ) lord Krishna says that he is kaama, which is not opposed to dharma. Kautilya in his Arthashastra ( 1.7 ) says that one may enjoy kaama, so long as it does not conflict with artha and dharma, but considers artha as more important than the other two, as they are dependent on artha for their fulfilment. He further adds that one

should not lead a life of no pleasure.<sup>1</sup> Manu ( 2.224 ) states that one should strive for the achievement of all the three aims, but practise dharma when artha and kaama are in conflict with it.

Next to sensual pleasures is the love of riches. Money is a medium of value with which one can buy food and creature comforts and also help less-well-to-do persons and creatures. With the development of currency and banking, however, it has become a store of value and has provided security and come to be valued for itself. Many now derive pleasure from the mere fact of its possession than its proper use. To explain this, I can do no better than quote from Mill:<sup>2</sup> what, for example, he asks " shall we say of love of money ? There is nothing originally more desirable about money than about any heap of glittering pebbles. Its worth is solely that of the things which it will buy, the desire for other things than itself, which it is a means of gratifying. Yet the love of money is not only one of the strongest motivating forces of human life, but money is in many cases desired in and for itself, the desire to possess it is stronger than the desire to use it and it goes on increasing when all the desires which point to ends beyond it, to be encompassed by it, are falling off. It may be then said truly that money is desired not for the sake of an end, but as the end itself; from being a means to happiness, it has come to be itself a principal ingredient of the individual's conception of happiness. " In the older times the miser suffered himself and made others dependent upon him suffer privation. But in the modern world money has become a source of corruption in the hands of the unscrupulous.

Tradition invests the Pancharatna religion of the Satvata race with great antiquity. The Satvata race worshipped Narayana, who is said to be an ancient god<sup>3</sup> and probably as

1. na nihsukhah syat. Arthashastra, 1.7

2. John Stuart Mill. Utilitarianism. Chapter 4.

3. purvesham api purvajah. VM.VII.172.51

pointed out by Dr. Dandekar<sup>1</sup> this Narayana finds a mention in Shat. Br. ( XII-3.4 ) as purusha Narayana. Internal evidence shows that in the time of Sauti, Satvata god Naryana had come to be identified with the Vedic god Vishnu. When the gods went to see Narayana to beg him to create some authority for the governance of the world, it is stated that Naryana created from his mind a son for the purpose. When Lord Shiva is praised as the supreme God, it is stated that both Brahmaa and Narayana waited upon him. Here Narayana is described as the wielder of the conch, the discuss and the mace, mounted upon the eagle god, which are both epithets of Vishnu.<sup>2</sup> Now this seems to have been the result of a process which had already started of popularising the Vedic gods by identifying them with the local gods.

The epic is however, silent about the ritualistic details of the Satvata religion. There is some evidence that the Satvata form of worship ( vidhi ) did consist of some religious rites even before the Narayaniya was composed. The earliest passage in which the term Pancharatra occurs is in the Shat. Br. ( VIII.6 ) in which Purusha Naryana is said to have conceived of a pancharatra sattrā ( sacrificial session ) for five days. In the Nara-Narayaniya section added by Harivanshakara ( XII-321 ), we have the story of king Vasu, who is said to have worshipped Hari ( Narayana ), with five sacrifices five times to escape from the god's curse. This shows that the name pancharatra literally meant a five-day sacrifice, which has a parallel in the Navaratra worship of goddess Durgaa held in the first nine days in the month of ashvin ( September-October ). The other explanations offered by Otto Schreder<sup>3</sup> are too fanciful to deserve credance. We get a detailed account of the pancharatra creed in the Narayania section of the Mokshadharma added by Harivamshakara ( 2nd century B.C. )

1. Dr. Dandekar, R. G. Bhandarkar as an Indologist, Research Unit Publication, No. 2, BORI, Poona, 1976, p. 51.

2. XIII. 141-142. ( Sauti ).

3. Otto Schreder, Introduction to Pancharatra and Ahirbudhnya Samhita, Madras, 1916, pp. 24-25.

Tradition invests the pancharatra religion with great antiquity. It is said to owe its origin to Narayana, who has his abode in Shvetadvipa. Vaishapayana describes Narayana as a very ancient god<sup>1</sup> and probably as pointed out by Dr. Dandekar<sup>2</sup> this same Narayana finds a mention in the Shat. Br. ( XII 3-4 ) as purusha Narayana. Both Satyaki and Kritavarma, warriors of the Satvata nacaa, who took a prominent part in the Bharata war, are mentioned as his devotees. Suta refers to it as ekanta dharma ( HD.348.4 ) and Sauti describes it as Satvata vidhi ( VI-62 ).

The second tenet of the Pancharatra system, namely ekantabhakti or exclusive devotion to Narayana as the supreme God, has been incorporated in the Gita. This is clear from such expressions as maccitta, matpara, ekabhakti, ananyabhak etc., which signify that the devotees should have sole devotion to Narayana and also accept him as the goal of life. Madhusudana explains the Gita verses ( xii.9-11 ) as follows : " a devotee should, if possible, practise meditation of God or if not, he should follow the Bhagavata dharma or even if that is not possible, he should renounce the fruit of his works. " The word Bhagavata does not occur anywhere in the Critical Edition of the Mbh. but is found to be used in the Harivansha in the sense of a devotee of the Bhagavat. It is now here used as a synonym for Pancharatra and in fact, Bana in his Harshacharita ( 8th uchvasa ) mentions the Bhagavatas separately from the followers of pancharatra.<sup>3</sup>

The term dharma, which occurs frequently in the Gita is taken by its commentators in the sense of varnashramadharma i.e. the rites and duties prescribed by the scriptures for the classes and stages of life. The term ashrama, however, does not occur in the Gita and so it is doubtful whether the concept of ashrama, had developed in the time of the Gita. The Upanishadas too do

1. VM. purvesham api purvajah, VII. 172.

2. Dr. Dandekar R. N., RGB as an Indologist, BORI, Poona, 1976, p. 51.

3. Kane H. D., Vol. V, Part II, p. 955, fn - 1548.

not speak of renunciation as a fourth ashrama until a much later date. Even the later Upanishada Shvetashvatara ( 6.22 ) recognises only three ashramas, as the expression atyashramibhyah seems to refer only to the ascetics who had passed beyond the three stages of life. The post-Buddhist Maitri Up. ( 4.3 ) says that it is improper for one to become a monk without passing through the ( first three ) stages of life. Even Gaudapadacharya refers only to three ashramas ( ashramas trividhah ) in his Karika on Mandukya Up. ( 3.6 ). It is only the Jabala up., of a much later date which says that one may renounce the world even after studentship, nay a person may do so on the very day he becomes indifferent to wordly life.

The term aashrama, however, does not occur in the Gita, and so it is doubtful whether the concept of ashrama had developed in the time of the Gita. The Gita seems to distinguish between the duties based on caste ( jatidharma, i-43 ) and the duties based on class ( chaaturvarnya ). Krishna says that he had created the four classes in accordance with the division of qualities and actions ( gunakarmavibhagashah, iv.13 ). Whatever that be in modern times man's profession is not determined by his birth but by his aptitude, training, choice and circumstances, and so his dharma is determined by the code and conduct appropriate to his calling. It is implicit in the concept of dharma that one should subordinate one's personal comfort and happiness to one's sense of duty. This is what the Lord means when he says that he is desire which is not opposed to one's duty. ( VII.II ).

The same consideration would seem to apply to social and humanitarian work undertaken by a person. Shri Aurobindo advises that one should relinquish even such work for his sake and should surrender oneself heart and soul to God. He seems to base his view on the Lord's final exhortation ( xviii.66 ) to Arjuna to abandon all duties and take shelter in him alone. It seems strange that after extolling the path of action to Arjuna throughout, the Lord should conclude with the advice to give up action altogether. This advice would have suited Arjuna very

well, as he wanted to avoid the destructive war at any cost. That he did not take it in that sense is clear from the fact that he decided to accept the advice of Krishna to fight. The phrase sarvadharman parityajya, therefore, means not renunciation of action but abandonment of its fruit ( phalatyaga ). Shri Ramanuja takes parityajya to mean 'renouncing the fruit and agency of action ' as taught in xviii.9-11. Shri Madhava also states that the renunciation of actions here means the relinquishment of their fruit.

Among the divine endowments the study of scriptures, sacrifices and giving of alms are the religious duties relevant for man. Giving of help to less fortunate fellow-beings without expectation of a return has an ennobling effect on character, but it should be given to deserving persons at the proper time and place. Although the Gita talks about sacrificial rites, which were the form of worship in those days, their injunction would apply to ritual worship of every kind. Thus the Lord does not disapprove of ritual worship, but says that one should undertake religious duties with faith but without expectation of any reward. The Gita does not attach much importance to the material sacrifice ( dravyayajna ), but says that any worship or spiritual practice becomes a yajna par excellence, if it is undertaken without the desire for a reward. Thus the Gita includes in this wider concept of yajna all spiritual practices such as scriptural study, austerities, self-control and pursuit of knowledge.

No one can follow his favourite propensity to the exclusion of moral values without grave danger to his spiritual progress. A purely intellectual approach to life breeds egoism and indifference to human suffering. Pure activism is likely to blunt moral sensibilities and make one forget that the goal of life is not success and prosperity, but God-realisation. Pure devotion, which is not based on the knowledge that we are all children of one God, breeds intolerance, bigotry and fundamentalist attitudes. The lives of our great sages and saints

show that they have followed a combination of the three paths. Shri Shankara, in spite of his predilection for knowledge based on renunciation, was a great activist. He travelled through out the length and breadth of the country and established four maths for the propagation of his advaita doctrine. He was also a devotee as is seem from his exquisite devotional songs addressed to different deities. Patanjali, who laid great emphasis on the Yoga of meditation, recommended the yoga of action ( kriyayoga ) and divine worship ( ishvarapranidhana ) as aids to meditation. In more recent times, shri Jnaneshvara, the great saint of Alandi ( Maharashtra ), began as a hathayogi of the Natha Sampradaya, practised the way of knowledge and became a jnani-bhakta. Shri Ramakrishna started as a devotee of goddess Kaali, became a jnani-bhakta and taught that social and humanitarian service was also a form of divine worship. His desciple Svami Vivekanand not only established the Ramakrishna Math but also the Ramakrishna mission, adopting the motto liberation of the Self and welfare of the world.<sup>1</sup> Thus wisdom is the supreme means of liberation, but is not exclusive of service to humanity and devotion to God.

**EPIC POLITY**

Before proceeding to discuss the functions of the State or the duties of a king, it is usual for most European writers to take up the problem of the origin of the State. Plato, for instance, tells us that the State arises out of individual needs and so when the society is organised on the principle of division of labour the division occasionally leads to conflict and so requires the imposition of central control. Neither Valmiki nor Vaisampayana has stated anything about the origin of kingship. Valmiki, however, ( VR.2.61 ) describes the perils of a kingless state and makes a passionate plea for monarchy. He says, in a kingless state there is no safety for one's life nor wealth, how then can truth prevail there ? In a kingless state people do not form associations, design gardens or places of worship. There are no festivities nor performing arts nor nation-building rallies. In a kingless state rich farmers and herdsmen are afraid to sleep with their doors open nor can merchants travel long distances with their rich wares in safety. Even the wandering monks, meditating on the infinite soul, do not find safe lodging, when night overtakes them. In a kingless state one cannot protect what one has nor procure what one has not. Even the soldiers are powerless to overcome miscreants, no one can call anything his own and people devour one another like fishes. If the king did not exist to adjudicate between right and wrong, the world will grope in the dark, and none will know how to behave and act.'

1. atmano mokshartham jagaddhitaya cha.

Very high ideals were placed before the king by Valmiki and Vaishampayana. Though Rama was an absolute ruler, Ramarajya had come to be regarded as an ideal state. Valmiki describes the righteous rule of Raama in the Yuddhakand ( VR. 116, 80-90 ). Under his benevolent rule widows did not lauent nor was there any fear from rogues or epidemics. The kingdom was free from thieves and robbers and misfortunes did not overtake anyone. All were happy and devoted to their duties and did not harm one another. The people lived along with their progeny in perfect health and free from grief. The rains came in proper time, the winds blew gently and the trees with their spreading brannches bore flowers and fruits. His subjects were content to perform their duties and lived a righteous and fruitful life during his long rule.

We do not get any similar description of the rule of Yudhishtira in the epic of Vaishampayana. But the advice of grandsire Bhishma ( XII. 140 ) indicates how a king should govern his kingdom. According to Bhishma the king should always wield the rod of justice and punish offenders against the law. The king has to oversee that the normal religious practices are carried out by the subjects according to shastric injunctions. For sage Utathya says in the Utathyagita ( XII. 91 ) " all beings prosper if religion prospers and deteriorate when the latter deteriorates; therefore one should promote religious practices." Sauti adds, with the advance of agriculture and trade, the king had to give protection to the crops of the agriculturists who toiled morning and evening in the fields and ensure safety to the traders, who had to carry their goods through forests and deserts to the markets ( XII. 90. 22, 23 ). Danda or punishment at the right moment and without fail to the miserents is the secret of success. When the subjects are protected day by day through danda, they also contribute to the prosperity of the king and the state. So Danda or punishment is the sine que non of successful government ( 121. 34 ). The whole adhyaya 121 is devoted to the praise of danda from various angles and no person, even if he be the king's father,

mother, brother, wife or priest can escape its jurisdiction. ( 121. 57 ). The king was expected to wield the rod of justice tempered with merry, but there is no clear indication about the legal procedure to be followed in the administration of justice.

According to Belwalkar, there was no original contract among the people, but the code was laid down by Prajapati when evil became dominant in a kingless state. Bhishma says<sup>1</sup> that Prajapati intervened and after laying down the code commissioned a duly accredited person, king Vainya to ensure that the code was honoured. Such a conflict arose when the code laid down the division of duties among the four classes ( varnas ). The Prajapati then composed a treatise dealing with a new science dandaniti, the science of polity, dealing with rewards and punishments, the protection of subjects and the means of extending one's kingdom. It was successively abridged by Vishalakshaa, Purandara, Bahudantaka and Brihaspati. The original works are no longer extant, but the names of those authors are quoted in Kautilya's Arthashastra.

There used to be a coucil consisting of elders, nobles, and generals to advise the king in serious situations. In the Mbh., however, even the influence of the council was reduced. Thus when Duryodhana met the councillors before embarking on the war, the council strongly advised him to avoid war with the Pandavas, but their counsel had no effect on him. Duryodhana did not heed the advise of his elders, Bhishma, Drona and Vidura and even their priest Dhaumya, who was specially invited to attend the meeting, who counselled him to come to terms with the Pandavas. But Duryodhana always sought the advise of his crafty maternal uncle Shakuni, while the trusted counsellor of the Pandavas was Krishna, their cousin on the mother's side. This was due to the fact that in a matrilineal society, the formal authority over the activities rested in the hands of brothers, mother's brother, mother's mother's brothers and so on.

<sup>1</sup>. Mbh. XII. 59. 108. 11 ( Sauti )

More than Suta, Sauti has made very useful contributions in this regard. He says that the success of a ruler depends on the manner in which he is able to select and manage his ministers, officers and personal attendants. He gives very shrewd and useful hints in XII. 86. 10 for appointing ministers in high places which hold true even in the present times. He further adds that in order to assist them in their different tasks there should be officers and messengers, everyone of whom must be endowed with the following qualities : he should come from a good family, should be of good character, eloquent, competent, clever, sweet-speaking, who does what he says and possesses good memory ( XII. 87.5 ).

In this regard Sauti has laid down two golden rules : one the ruler's best treasure is the appointment of competent officers in several spheres ( XII. 56.34 ) and two while doing this he should prefer a person proficient in actual achievement to one who is merely skilled in words and schemes ( XII. 58. 15 ). It is, however, not sufficient to expect good performance from ministers, concillors, and personal servants. The king has to enforce it by suitable rewards for good services and by appropriate punishments in the case of lapses. Sauti gives the quintessence of the statecraft in stanza XII. 89.4. Here the king is advised to be the garland-maker of the State. Just as a gardener weaves together into a charming garland flowers of different hues, he should promote perfect harmony among his subjects professing different views and working in different professions. Opposed to this is the work of the incendiary ( angaarika ) who takes delight in discovering and accentuating differences and keeps subjects at loggerheads to increase his hold on them ( XII. 89.4 ). As the Critical Editor ( PCXC ) says, ' who will deny that this admonition has an application as moral for all times. '

The concept of a universal monarch does not seem to have existed even in the later period of Ramayana. Of the later ashvamedhas, the one planned by Sagar has been added by Suta

( 1.38 ) and of the three by Indra ( 7.77 ), by Ila ( 7.81 ) and by Raama ( 7.83 ) have been inserted by the last redactors in the first century A. D. But he too does not mention that the ashvamedha performed by Raama was a royal horse sacrifice intended to establish his suzerainty over the other kings. In the ashvamedhikaparva of the Mbh., however, Suta mentions that on the advice of Vyasa Yudhishtira performed the ashvamedha sacrifice to atone for the havoc caused in the Bharata war. He had undertaken this war with the express purpose of establishing his suzerainty over the kings; Yudhishtira is said to have let loose the sacrificial horse and nominated Arjuna as the guardian of the horse and performed the sacrifice after Arjuna returned victorious with the horse. Suta and Sauti have also added legends to show that Yudhishtira had performed the sacrifice to establish his suzerainty over the other kings. It is, however, doubtful whether this included the annexation of the conquered States to Hastinapura and the appointment of deputies to rule over the conquered States.

**Adhyaya - 13**

# Adhyaya - 13

## EPIC SOCIETY

We shall discuss in this chapter the epic society as it existed in the time of Valmiki and Vaishampayana and the changes that took place thereafter. Ayodhya is not mentioned in the Vedic Index. Both Ayodhya and Kosala appear in the late Vedic period. Law mentions that Ayodhya was a village during the late Vedic period and cites Ait. Br. and Sankhyana shrauta sutras<sup>1</sup>. Sankalia places the foundation of Ayodhya provisionally in 1500 B. C.<sup>2</sup>

According to Panikkar, the colonisation of plains had not been completed during the period of Valmiki and the great centres of ashrama life were deep in the heart of Hindustan.<sup>3</sup> As Brockington observes ( p. 69 ), Ayodhya in Valmiki's time did not materially differ from a village and was at best a village town. The people of Kosala and Ayodhya were Vedic Aryans, who had colonised this region in the immediate post-Vedic period. They worshipped deities in the Vedic pantheon such as Indra, Ashvins, Parjanya and Varuna rather than deities of classical Hinduism, Shiva and Vishnu. In the Vedic period Indra was prominent among the gods with Vishnu subordinate

<sup>1</sup> B. C. Law, *Historical Geography of Ancient India*, Paris, 1954, p. 67

## **2. H. D. Sankhla : Ayodhya of the Ramayana in a Historical Perspective, ABORI.**

Diamond Jubilee Volume 1977-78, pp. 911-12.

3. K. M. Panikkar, Geographical factors in Indian History, p. 40

to him and designated as Upendra. In the time of Valmiki, Indra was still the most prominent god with Vishnu subordinate to him as Rama is compared to Indra and Lakshmana to Vishnu ( VR.6.24 ). Varuna was still more prominent than Shiva, as it was he who gave the famous bow to Janaka. ( VR.2.28 ). Valmiki does not refer to Shiva, who became prominent only in the time of Vaishampayana, who called him Mahadeva, the Supreme God ( MGG, p. 87 ). Vishnu came to be regarded as the supreme God and attained prominence only in the time of Sauti. ( 450 B.C. )<sup>1</sup>

The ancient Indian society in Valmiki's time was so organised and regulated as to bring about the material and spiritual development of the individual. The law which governed the social and individual life was known as varnadharma which was a distinctive feature of Indian culture. The society was divided into classes ( varna ) to procure for it the services which each class was, both by birth and training, well-fitted. This had two advantages firstly they inherited the qualities from their parents who belonged to the same class and received special training from them for the specific services they had to render to the society and secondly it avoided overlapping and break-neck competition among the classes.

In Valmiki's time the Aryan society was straitified into four classes or varnas as is clear from the passage ( VR.2.76 ), where it is stated that when Bharata set out to meet Rama in the forest, kshatriyas, vaishyas, shudras and brahmins got ready to go with him. In the Aranyakanda Jataayu speaks of the tradition based on Rigveda ( X.90 ). " Manu bore men by noble Kashyapa brahmins, kshatriyas, vaishyas and shudras; from the mouth were born brahmins, from the chest kshatriyas, from the thighs vaishyas, and from the feet shudras according to scripture ( VR.3.13 ). This shows that the order of the four varnas had been established in the time of Valmiki.

1. MGG. pp. 93, 98

The occupations of the four varnas have not been spelt out at one place, but can be gleaned from the references in Valmiki's original Ramayana ( VR ). The brahmins are described as yajakas ( VR.1.12 ) and vedapargas ( VR.2.23 ) their duty being to study the Vedas and perform the sacrifices. Bharata, as he apporached Ayodhya, considered sacrificing brahmins profiicient in the Vedas as characteristic of that city ( VR.2.65 ) We are further told that the hermitages in the Dandakarnya echoed with the sound of the Vedic recitations and it is said that the start of the rains was the time for the brahmins to chant the same hymns ( VR.4.27 ). The kshatryas were referred to by Vedic term rajanya, which implied their right to rule and the term also included the warriors ( yodhas ). As regards the vaishyas among the persons who surrounded Bharata, the leaders of the guilds of merchants are mentioned along with brahmins and the king's councillors ( VR.6.113 ). There are also references to markets ( antarapāna or apana ) and long distance trade through caravans,<sup>1</sup> Valmiki also mentions various categories of royal servants, such as guards and craftsmen ( VR.2.73 ), mahuts and elephant-riders ( VR.3.44 ), cooks ( VR.3.54 ), bards and charioteers at the courts and actors, singers and dancers at the courts ( VR.6.14 ). The craftsman perhaps fabricated the wepaons including the bows and the arrows as also the musical instruments used on the battle fields. Of the twenty two musical instruments mentioned by Valmiki, half were drums. Other musical instruments used on the battle field were the conch, the horn ( turya ), the drum, the beating of which served as a signal to start the war ( VR.2.75 ); Valmiki also refers to a drummer ( VR.2.14 ). The two terms dasa and preshya, which occur frequently in VR denote personal servants rather than slaves. Slavery as such did not exist in the days of Valmiki, as there is no reference to the buying and selling of slaves therein, apart from the purchase of Sunahshepa narrated by Suta ( VS.6.60 ), which is a legend.

1. VR. 2.48.28, 2.61.17, 3.58.31 and 4.66.33.

In the early times the brahmins were held in high regard and enjoyed certain privilages, as they were not allowed to follow any other profession; the society used to give them gifts ( dakshina ) to maintain themselves and their families. This practice is mentioned on four occasions by Valmiki, in which gifts of cows, gold and silver were given by Dasharatha to them after the completion of the ashvamedha sacrifice ( VR.1.13 ), by Rama at the time of his departure to the forest ( VR.2.29 ), by Bharata at the time of performing the obsequies of Dasharatha ( VR.2.27 ) and by Sita after she made a vow to river Ganga ( VR.3.46 ). However, any eagerness on the part of a brahmin to secure larger gifts was viewed with disfavour as in the episode of Trijata Gargya ( VR.2.29 ).

The freedom and status enjoyed by women in a society is a measure of its cultural advance. In the days of Valmiki, the women were free to move about in the public and were not confined to the inner apartment ( antahpura ). The inner apartment seems to have been meant for their protection rather than their seclusion. The appointment of female superintendents ( VR.2.14 ) as well as the female door keepers in Kausalya's apartment. ( VR.2.17 ) must have served the same purpose. When Sita accompaigned Raama to the forest, she drove freely through the town ( VR.2.35 ). When Bharata went to Chitrakuta to persuade Raama to return, Dasharatha's widows accompanied him ( VR.2.77 ). The presence of the married women at some of the great public rituals seems to have been a common feature. When Rama made his triumphant entry into Ayodhya at the end of his exile, women were among the crowds who went to greet him ( VR.6.99 ).

As Vaishampayana was mainly concerned with the description of the Bharata war, we do not get much information about the epic society as it existed in his time. As the time-gap between Valmiki and Vaishanpayana was only two centuries, we can take it that the social conditions as existed in Valmiki's time continued during the time of Vaishanpayana also. The

conditions as they existed in the time of Vaishanpayana are contained in VM ( XIII.126-134 ) in which Narada narrates the conversation between Maheshvara and the sages who had assembled on the Himavat mountain. The sages had assembled there to meet religious-minded Krishna who was observing a vow extending over twelve years to propitiate Shiva and obtain the boon of a son from him. In this dialogue, Vaishanpayana discusses a number of topics such as varnadharma, garhasthyadharma, vanaprasthadharma, rishidharma, bhikshudharma and stridharma, but as pointed out by the Critical Editor, 'the discussion lacks any kind of method or logical order or even depth.'

Among the duties cast on the first three classes, performance of sacrifices, the making of gifts and Vedic studies, were common to all. The Lord of the universe had laid down the following other duties for a brahmin, namely officiating at others' sacrifices, receiving of gifts and teaching of scripturas. The primary duty of a kshatriya was to protect all creatures. Administration of justice, devotion to truth, self-restraint and succour to those in distress were the duties by performing which a king covered himself with glory. If a warrior laid down his life on the battel field, he earned the merit of performing a horse-sacrifice and went to heaven. The duties of a vaishya consisted in tending cattle, agriculture and trading. The service of the higher classes constituted the duty of a shudra.

Of special interest in the dialogue between Lord Shiva and Uma is the unequivocal statement of the former that a person born in a lower class could enter a higher class by performing deeds of religious merit. Lord Shiva said, "With the aid of mertorious deeds, O Goddess, a person who is born in a lower class, say a shudra, may become a brahmin, when he becomes well-versed in the Vedic lore and is cleansed of all stains. On the other hand, a brahmin who is wicked and does not observe his dharma, falls from the status of a brahmin and becomes a

shudra. If a pious nature and righteous conduct are noticed in a shudra, he should be considered a brahmin. Neither birth nor purificatory rites nor learning nor humility can be regarded as grounds for conferring, the status of a brahmin on anyone. In this matter the conduct of a person is the sole test."

Uma then asked Lord Shiva to tell her the common duties of all classes. The Lord said that there are two ways of life, the way of action ( pravritti ) and the way of renunciation ( nivritti ). The householder who follows the way of action, earns great merit by performing the five sacrifices, by being truthful in speech and free from malice, by being humble and sincere in his dealing and by eating his meals after serving a guest. Hospitality to a guest is an important duty of a householder.

Lord Shiva further said that the way of renunciation is followed by an ascetic for the attainment of emancipation. His foremost duty is compassion towards all creatures. He should not reside at a place for more than a day and should not be attached to his possessions, although they may be the barest necessities. Subjugation of the senses and self-control are the distinguishing marks of an ascetic. After he has subdued his senses, he is known as hamsa and after he has transcended the gunas and realised the Self, he is known as paramahansa. There is nothing superior to the latter state, which is changeless, beyond sorrow and happiness and free from old age and death.

The pursuit of individual happiness often involves causing pain or unhappiness to others and also does not furnish a standard for moral conduct. In order to get over this difficultly, materialists of the West such as Jeremy Beutham and J.S. hill had to devise a theory of 'general happiness' so that those actions were held to be morally right, which gave 'the greatest happiness to the greatest number' Jeremy Beutham, while explaining how a person, pursuing his own happiness can be

prevented from causing pain to others, invoked three sanctions namely political sanction, social sanction and theological sanction.

Human desires are also regulated by the concept of his duty ( dharma ) in relation to the social group of which he is a member. Even in ancient times he had to enter into different types of social relationships for his survival and continuation of his race. In the Hindu society, as we have it now, the duties based on varnashramadharma have long since become outdated and ceased, although the rigidities of the caste system still continue to operate to the detriment of national cohesion and solidarity. However, the basic idea that the duties of a person depend upon his membership of a social group remains relevant and valid even in modern conditions. In a modern society a human being is at the same time a member of different co-operative groups, such as his family, his club, his professional group, his nation or an international group such as the Rotary or the Lion's club. Bradley rightly insists that the moral life of an individual depends on his fulfilling the particular duties which belong to his particular station in the social group. In doing this he is mainly guided by the duties of the people, either handed down by oral tradition or incorporated in their personal law. Such persons who regulate their desires on the basis of what they conceive to be their duty and take delight in discharging it, are called dharmaarama ( Ananda, UT.16 ). However, the ultimate goal of human life is not merely the performance of one's dharma, but God realisation.

During this period agriculture and cattle-breeding had made considerable progress. Agricultural implements such as the hoe and the plough had come to be in regular use during this period. Sauti makes a reference to langala i.e. a hoe<sup>1</sup> and also mentions a hala i.e. a plough.<sup>2</sup> As stated in the Udyogaparva ( 152.7 ), cutting instruments were also in use such as axe

1. Mbh.III. 10.10, Sauti.

2. Mbh. III. 241.37, Sauti.

( kuthara ) and the pick-axe ( kuddala ), with which they could now fell the trees and break clods of earth. This facilitated the extension of agriculture to forest lands and also establishment of contacts with eastern and southern parts of the country. A passage in the Udyogaparva<sup>1</sup> states that the land does not yield a crop without rain, but also immediately adds that it can be watered with human effort.

These facts are supported by the archaeological discoveries of agricultural tools such as the hoe and the ploughshare etc. and the ring wells in Artranjikhera in the period of the NBC culture ( 600-250 B. C. ). Although the ring-wells found at Atranjikhera in the NBP ware complex were mainly used for drinking water purposes, it is possible that these people also used such wells for watering land. From what Suta mentions in the ghoshayatra<sup>2</sup> it appears that there were also cattle enclosures in which the cattle were kept and counted and calves branded. This was, therefore, a period of agro-pastoral society with considerable urbanisation and flourishing agriculture and stock-breeding activities.

1. Mbh. V. 77.2, Sauti.

2. SM. III. 225-243.

## Adhyaya - 14

### EPIC RELIGION

The Mahabharata contains a record of the philosophical systems during its period. During this time, we come across two ancient systems known as Sankhya, with its allied system Yoga, which had earned a reputation in the early religious and philosophical literature. The Mokshadharma ( Mbh. XII. 168-353 ) and the Anugita ( Mbh. XIV. 16-50 ) added by Suta and Sauti shows the immense popularity which it had gained during this period. But the most ancient parts of the Mbh., which relate to Sankhya and Yoga are contained in Shukanuprashna ( adhys 221-227 ), Vasishta-Karala-Janaka Samvada ( adhys. 291-296 ) and the Yajnavalkya-Janaka samvada ( adhys. 298-306 ) of the Mokshadharma, and the Guru-Shishya-Samvada ( adhys. 35-40 ) in the Anugita added by Suta and the Bhagavadgita added by Sauti ( 450 B. C. ).

The Sankhya system had a non-Vedic origin as is clear from the fact that it is mentioned separately from the Vedas and Aranyakas in M. D. ( XII. 337. 1 ).<sup>1</sup> The Sankhya system has

received the highest encomiums in the ancient Brahmanical and epic literature, and the Sankhya teachers have been held in high regard by the ancient thinkers. Thus the Atharvana Parishista ( X. iii. 3. 4 ) mentions the Sankhya teachers Kapila, Asuri and Panchashikha in connection with the tarpana invocation while offering libations of water to the deceased ancestors. The Ashvalayana Grihyasutra in its tarpana list gives directions for making respectful offerings to the Sankhyas and Siddhas. They are mentioned in the epic in such flattering terms as tattvachintakah, sankhyadarshinah and mahaprajnah ( M. D. 301 ). The Sankhyas seem to have had such a pervasive influence over the other systems that it is said that whatever higher knowledge is to be found in the Vedas, the Sankhyas ( i.e. the Sankhya schools ), the Yoga and the various Puranas belongs to the Sankhya thinkers ( M D. 290. 103 ).

None of the Sankhya texts which existed before the Sankhya-Karika of Ishvarakrishna are extant now. Ishwara-krishna himself states that his Karika represents a summary of a work known as Sastitantra ( SK. 72 ), but this work also is not available. Although we get references to Sankhya ideas and Yoga practices in later Upanishads such as the Katha, the Mundaka and the Shvetashvatara, our main source of the Sankhya system in the ancient times is the Mbh. The great mass of material relating to Sankhya found in the Mokshadharma ( Mbh. XII. 168-353 ) and the Anugita ( Mbh. XIV. 16-50 ) shows the immense popularity which it had gained during this period. But the most ancient parts of Mbh. which relate to Sankhya and Yoga are contained in Sukanuprashna ( adhyayas 224-227 ), Vashistha-Karala-Janaka-Samvada ( adhyayas 291-296 ) and Yajnavalkya-Janaka-Samvada ( adhyayas 228-306 ) of the Mokshadharma and the Guru-Shishya-Samvada ( adhyayas 35-40 ) in the Anugita added by Suta and the Bhagavadgita added by Sauti ( 450 B. C. ). We have, however, to bear in mind that the epic accounts of Sankhya in the above dialogues are ascribed to Vasishta, Yajnavalkya and Vyasa,

1. Sankhyain yogain panhartrain vedaranyakam eva ca.

who were staunch Vedantists.

According to the Sankhyas, the world consists of two ultimate principles, the insentient prakriti belonging to the realm of matter and a sentient purusha belonging to the realm of the spirit. According to Vasishtha, the doctrine of prakriti is based on inference. Thus from the material objects that we see in this world, we infer the existence of gross elements, from gross elements, of egoism, from egoism of the great principle ( mahat ) and from the latter of prakriti, where one has to stop to avoid infinite regress. The prakriti is, therefore, described as alinga i.e. without a distinguishing mark ( XII. 291. 42 ). This eightfold prakriti gives rise to sixteen vikaras or effects, namely, the five organs of sense, the five organs of action, the mind and the five objects of senses. In addition to these twenty-four categories, there is the twenty-fifth category, the purusha who is the conscious Self. Vasishtha further tells us that the conception of purusha is also based on inference ( XII. 291. 42 ). But the Sankhya doctrine of pararthatva that every composite thing such as the body or the mind exists for another entity distinct from it, does not find a mention in the epic. The eternal purusha is distinct from the ever-changing prakriti and remains unaffected even when in conjunction with it like a lotus leaf on water. The doctrine of gunas as qualities of prakriti was also known to Suta ( XII. 293. 20-25 ), who gives an elaborate description of the psychic qualities which arise from the predominance of one quality over the other two in a person ( XIV. 36-39 ). Man is said to suffer bondage so long as he identifies purusha with prakriti or its gunas through ignorance, but attains emancipation through discriminating knowledge between the two. Vasishtha further tells Janaka ( XII. 296 ) that when the Self realises his true nature through discriminating knowledge, he is to be regarded as the twenty-sixth principle, which is the eternal, stainless, primeval Brahman. According to Yajnavalkya, this twenty-sixth principle is the pure supreme

Self without attributes, and when the individual Self realises himself as different from prakriti, he becomes liberated and beholds the Supreme Self ( XII. 396.74 ).

Suta then proceeds to describe how this process of evolution takes place ( XII. 291 ). The formless Brahman, which is self-existent and bountiful, creates the first embodied being of vast proportions, of infinite deeds and of cosmic form ( vishvarupa ). This First-born is radiant, immutable and possessed of eight yogic powers<sup>1</sup> and is known as Hiranyagarbha. He has his hands and feet stretching in all directions, with eyes, ears, mouths and heads everywhere. In the yogic scripture he is known as the great principle ( mahat ), Virinci and the First-born. In the Sankhya he is known by diverse names. Undergoing modifications, Hiranyagarbha produces the principle of egoism also known as prajapati, from which arise the five great elements. From them evolves the vikara group, namely, the mind, the ten sense organs and the five objects of senses.

The accounts of Yoga as given by Suta and Sauti in the Mokshadharma are more or less similar. Although Suta points out that the Vedas knew of the eightfold Yoga ( Mbh. XII. 304. 7 ), it is clear that it could not refer to the ashtangayoga of Patanjali, of whom there is no mention in the Epic. Vasishtha states that meditation is an obligatory practise with the yogis and is their superb power. According to him, meditation is of two kinds, the one involving the regulation of breath and the other concentration of mind ( XII. 294. 8 ). Suta also states that

1. These yogic powers are given in the following verse :  
*anima laghima praptih prakamyam mahima tatha  
 isitvaim ca vasitvam ca tathu kamavasayita*

They are : (1) the power of becoming as small as an atom, (2) the power of levitation, (3) the power of obtaining anything at will, (4) irresistible will, (5) the power of increasing size, (6) supremacy, (7) the power of subduing others, (8) suppression of desire.

the control of breath and concentration of mind constitute the two main characteristics of Yoga ( XII. 304.9 ). Suta then goes on to describe how one should practise meditation. He says that after giving up all attachments and observing moderation in diet, a person should subjugate his senses and fix his mind on the Self during the first and last part of the night. For this purpose, after withdrawing his senses from the sense-objects he should assume a posture as motionless as a block of stone and try to calm down his mind with the help of his understanding. When he does not hear nor smell, nor taste and see, when he is not sensitive to any touch, when he cherishes no thought and is not conscious of anything, he is said to be perfect in Yoga. At this time he shines like a lamp in a windless place<sup>1</sup> and becomes united with Brahman. Then the Self reveals himself in the heart of the yogi like a blazing fire or like the bright sun or like a flash of lightning in the sky. By such practices the yogi succeeds in realising the Self that transcends decay and death.

It is thus obvious that what the Suta describes is a theistic Sankhya-Yoga system, which deals with Sankhya and Yoga together and treats them as one. He asserts that he who sees Sankhya and Yoga as one and that both lead to the same goal, namely freedom from death, knows the truth ( XII. 293, 304 ). This is also the view of the core of Bhagavadgita ( V.5 ).

But there are also a number of passages in the Mbh. added by Suta which indicate that they are two ancient systems ( XII. 337. 68 ).<sup>2</sup> In the same adhyaya we are told that there are five systems, namely Sankhya, Yoga, Pancharatra, the Vedas, and the Pashupata, and that they hold different views, nanamatani ( verse 59 ). It is also said that Sankhya and Yoga were originally declared by two different sages, Kapila and

1. cf. BG. VI. 19.

2. sankhyam ca yogam ca sanatane dve.

Hiranyagarbha respectively. This finds independent corroboration in the Alurbudhnyasamhita ( XII. 32 ) which states that Hiranyagarbha had disclosed the entire system of Yoga in two different texts,<sup>1</sup> nirodhasamhita and karmasamhita. Mbh. XII. 289. 9 added by Suta tells us that us that Sankhya and Yoga do not have the same system (*darshanam na samam tayoh*) and gives reasons for holding this view. There we are told that both claim superiority for their own system and advance arguments in support of their claim. The followers of Yoga say that their system is superior, because, they ask, ' how can the anishvara Sankhya win release ? ' They further argue that only those who undergo the Yogic discipline acquire the necessary power or strength to destroy the bonds of action due to greed. Nilakantha<sup>2</sup> explains that the expression anishvarah katham mucyed suggests that it is difficult to attain liberation without God. He further adds that they adduce the above reasons to establish the excellence of their system ( svapakshotkarshaya ca ). Hopkins<sup>3</sup> has rightly suggested that this passage is a clear indication of an atheistic Sankhya.

Professor S. N. Dasgupta, however, has advanced the view that Sankhya was probably theistic originally and became atheistic for the first time in the Sankhya school of Caraka and Panchashikha and became confirmed in this regard finally in Ishvarakrishna's Sankhyakarika. In support of this view Dasgupta<sup>4</sup> cites the contents of Sastitantra an old Sankhya text, as given in the Ahirbudhnya Samhita. In this text, the topics of shastitantra are grouped into thirty-two original principles (prakrita-mandala) and twenty-eight derivative principles

1. adau hiranyagarbhena dve prokie yogasamhite.

2. ishvaram vina mokshadaurlabhyasucanat, Nil. Mbh. XII. 300. 2, Chitrashala Press.

3. E. W. Hopkins, The Great Epic of India, pp. 104-106.

4. S. N. Dasgupta, A History of Indian Philosophy, Vol. I, Cambridge 1922, pp. 219-

20 ( See also M. D. Ramanujacharya and Dr. Schrader, Ahirbudhnya Samhita, pp. 108-110 ).

(vaikrita-mandala). It is not known what exactly is the basis of Dasgupta's view that the Sankhya is theistic, but if it is the expression *tatra 'dyam brahmatatram tu*, it may be mentioned that the word *brahman* was also in current use to denote *prakriti*, and the mere mention of *brahmatatra* is not sufficient to prove that Sankhya was theistic. Both the series given in the *Ahirbudhnya Samhita* are not to be found among the tattvas usually mentioned in the Sankhya texts, especially in the *Sankhyakarika*, which, its author says, is a summary of *Sastitantra* (SK. 72). In his commentary on this karika, Vachaspati quotes a verse from *Rajavartika*<sup>1</sup>, which enumerates the sixty topics of *Sastitantra* as follows : (1) the existence of *prakriti*, (2) its oneness, (3) its objectiveness, (4) its distinctness (from *purusha*), (5) its purposiveness (for the sake of *purusha*), (6) plurality of *purushas*, (7) isolation (of *purusha* from *prakriti* at the end), (8) conjunction (of the *purusha* with *prakriti* at the beginning), (9) duration, (10) inactivity of the *purusha*; these ten form the original categories. In addition to these there are the five kinds of Error, nine kinds of contentment and twenty-eight kinds of disabilities of the organs, which together with the eight forms of power make up the sixty topics. Vachaspati says that these sixty topics are dealt with in the seventy karikas, which represent a complete system. The first ten topics known as *maulikarthas* are referred to in the glosses on *Sankhyakarika* by Jayamangala, Mathara and other Sankhya texts<sup>2</sup> included in the Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, No. 246.

Thus the Sankhya differed not only from Yoga but also consisted of different schools, which had different

1. The author of *Rajavartika* is not known. Garbe thinks that Bhoja is its author. *Tattvakaumudi*, Poona Oriental Series No. 10, Poona 1934, p. 29.

2. *sankhyasangraha* : (i) *sankhya-tattva-vivechana* (p.22), (ii) *Tattvayatharthayadipana* (p.80), (iii) *Tattvasamasasatravritti* (p. 135).

3. The MD. lists different numbers of tattvas at different places, seventeen at XII. 267, 28, eighteen at XII. 239, 15, twenty at XII. 267, 30, twenty-four in *adhyaya* 296, twenty-five at XII. 298, 10, and elsewhere twenty-six tattvas already mentioned.

terminologies and had different number of tattvas or principles.<sup>3</sup> Mbh. itself uses the word *Sankhya* in the plural and the word *Yoga* in the singular in MD.<sup>4</sup> The *Bhagavadgita* and the *Mokshadharma* are found to employ different terminologies to denote the two ultimate principles to an earlier school of Sankhya, as they occur in the *Shvetashvatara* and in the *Vasishta-Karalajanaka-Samvada* in the *Mokshadharma*. The terminology *kshetra* and *kshetrajna* i.e. the Field and the Knower of the Field is ascribed to *Panchashikha* in MD. (XII. 211.2). Another school of Sankhya can be seen in the *Charakasamhita*, which combined *purusha* with *avyakta* or *prikriti* and accepted only twenty-four principles. *Ashvaghosha* employed the two terms *vyakta* and *avyakta* in expounding the philosophy of Araada, the former Sankhya teacher of Buddha. Yet another Sankhya school is found to employ the terminology of *adhibhuta* and *adhyatma*, based on an analysis of the physical and the mental worlds and the interrelationship between the two. In the account of the Sankhya given by *Ashvaghosha*, we do not find a mention of *gunas* in the sense of qualities or constituents of *prakriti*. He, however, refutes the doctrine of *guṇas* in his *Budhacharita* XXVI. 104 from which it appears that the theory of *gunas* had received an elaborate treatment in yet another school of Sankhya. Some of these different schools continued to exist even in later times, for in his commentary on *Yaga-sutra* II. 23, Vyasa mentions eight different theories about the cause of conjunction of *purusha* with *prakriti* and Vachaspati in his *Tattvavaisharadi* explains that all these alternatives are taken from Sankhya texts.

The development of Sankhya and Yoga seems to have proceeded independently of each other, and their basic differences came to be crystallised in the *Yogasutras* of Patanjali (1st century A. D.) and in the *Sankhya-karika* of Ishvarakrishna (4th century A. D.). But even after the

4. vedeshu sankhyeshn tathaiva yoge (Mbh. XII. 290. 103).

composition of the Sankhya-karika, Paramartha ( 6th century A. D. ) tells us that there were eighteen schools of Sankhya in his Sankhya-karika. The Sankhya-karika was a landmark in the historical development of Sankhya, as it unified all the differing Sankhya schools and rendered all previous Sankhya texts redundant. The unifying principle was provided by the doctrine of satkarya,<sup>1</sup> which is conspicuous by its absence in the Epic and the Bhagavadgita. The school of Varshaganya had given some thought to the problem of causation, as is seen from Vasubandhu's quotation ( Abhidharmakosha, IV. 64 ) ' That which is, exists; that which is not, does not exist. That which is not, does not come into existence, and that which is, is not destroyed ' ( Cf. BG. ii. 16 ). Johnston rightly describes this ' as a half-way house ' to the later theory of satkaryavada, which states that the effect exists potentially in the cause. The gross elements are then regarded as the effect of subtle elements, the tanmatras, namely sound, colour, touch, taste and smell, which are now included in the prakriti group. On the other hand, the gross elements space, wind, fire, water, and earth, which figure in the prakriti group in the Epic Sankhya, are now relegated to the vikara group. With the development of this causal theory, the order of evolution in the classical Sankhya starts with prakriti as the primeval cause of the material universe, evolving successively into the great principle ( mahat ), egoism ( ahankara ) and the five tanmatras, which are the effects of prakriti and causes of sixteen vikritis. These sixteen vikritis or effects are the ten senses, the mind and five gross elements. The gunas, as existing potentially in the prakriti, are now regarded as the constituents of prakriti, latent in its state of equilibrium as well as its evolved products.

It will thus be seen that classical Sankhya differs from classical Yoga in the two respects mentioned by the Epic.

1. Early Sankhya, London 1937, p. 88. According to Johnston, this doctrine was not known to Nagarjuna and so could not have arisen before the 3rd century A.D., pp. 66-67.

Classical Sankhya is atheistic and regards knowledge as the exclusive means of liberation. In karika 65 Ishvarakrishna states that prakriti binds herself by the seven aspects and liberates herself by one, which is evidently nothing else but discriminating knowledge. According to him, this knowledge could be attained by the study of Sankhya scripture. Classical Yoga, on the other hand, is theistic, although its concept of God is that he is only a distinguished Self, purushavishesha, untouched by actions, afflictions etc. The God of Patanjali is not the Upanishadic Brahman, which is the cause of the origination and dissolution of the world. Yoga also places great emphasis on the method of meditation for overcoming the bonds of actions and past impressions. Again while the Epic Sankhya brings out very clearly the difference between prakriti and purusha, it does not explain why these two dissimilar principles should come into conjunction. Patanjali, following Varsaganya, explains it by the doctrine of avidya, according to which ignorance is the cause of conjunction. Ishvarakrishna, on the other hand, adopts the purusharthata theory that prakriti works to bring about either of the two goals of life, namely enjoyment and emancipation ( Yoga Sutra, II. 23 ). Perhaps this doctrine originated with Panchashikha, whom Ishvarakrishna mentions among the Sankhya teachers.

From this it is evident that at least the classical Sankhya and Yoga were different. We have, therefore, to find out in what sense both Vasishtha and Yajnavalkya affirm that they are the same. Evidently, the Epic Sankhya-Yoga was the result of a conscious effort to bring about a synthesis of Sankhya and Yoga with Vedanta. Vasishtha and Yajnavalkya, as we saw before, added the twenty-sixth principle, Brahman, to the twenty-five principles of the Sankhyas and made their prakriti subservient to it. They also adopted the Yogic method of meditation as the method for concentrating the mind on the Self. With these two major changes, the major differences between the two disappeared, and so they could claim that Sankhya and Yoga were the same and that only the ignorant thought that they were

different.

The Sankhyas had also given considerable thought to the theory of action in general and to Vedic ritual in particular. They were totally opposed to the sacrificial rites as they involved destruction of life. They held that every kind of activity proceeds from prakriti or more specifically from the vyakta or manifest forms of prakriti and that actions which are produced by them cannot lead to the realisation of the Self. The Sankhyas, therefore, believe that liberation can be attained only through knowledge preceded by the initiation ceremony for a monk as fixed by Kapila. In his Dharmasutra II. 6. 7, he further tells us that the different ashramas came to be devised by Kapila, son of Prahlada, because of his hostility to the Vedic gods and that sane men, therefore, should not pay any heed to them. By this Bodhayana seems to suggest that there is only one order, that of the householder and the intention of Kapila in devising the ashramas was to wean away people from their sacrificial offerings and make them less powerful. It seems that due to its pervasive influence, it later came to be adopted as the fourth ashrama. It will be seen later that the main tenets of the theistic Sankhya and Yoga as mentioned by Suta were incorporated in the Gita by Sauti.

#### **The Pancharatra System :**

We get a detailed account of the Pancharatra system in the Narayaniya section of the Mokshadharma added by Harivamshakara (2nd century B.C.).<sup>1</sup> The latter also refers to it as Satvata dharma in MD. 332.5, but it was known to Suta as Ekanta Dharma (MD. 348.4). The term Bhagavata, however, which is often regarded as synonymous with the Pancharatra religion does not occur in the Mbh.<sup>2</sup> Sauti refers to the Satvata vidhi (Mbh. VI. 62. 39) according to which Sankarashana is

1. The word Bhagavata, which occurs in some manuscripts of Mbh. yada bhagavato  
tyartham asid raja mahan vasuh (MD. 324.1) does not find a place in the  
Critical Edition.

said to have sung the praise of Vaasudeva. The doctrine of the four vyuhas was also known to Sauti, who mentions them in the Bhishmaparva (61. 64-67). Later in the Anushasanaparva (143. 37), where he refers to Vaasudeva as the pervader of the universe and without attributes and to Sankarshna as Jiva. It is, therefore, probable that the Pancharatra religion with its doctrine of vyuhas, image worship and its exclusive devotion to God had fully developed in Sauti's time.

Tradition invests the Pancharatra religion with great antiquity. It is said to owe its origin to Narayana, who has his abode in Shvatadvipa. This Narayana is said to be the defender of the Satvata religion, sasvatadharma (MD. 332.5)<sup>1</sup> and both Satyaki and Kritavarma, warriors of the Satvarta race, who took a prominent part in the Mahabharata war, are referred to as his devotees. Narayana is said to be a very ancient God, purvesham api purvajah (Mbh. VII. 172. 51), and probably as pointed out by Dandekar<sup>2</sup> this same Narayana finds a mention in Sat. Br. (XII. 3. 4) as purusha Narayana.

In the meantime the Vedic people had progressed from their nomadic stage to the stage of peacetime agriculture and had no use for their war-god Indra. The latter's amorous escapades also must have offended their moral susceptibilities, and so they looked out for an innocuous Vedic god, who was closely connected with vegetation and fertility. Their choice fell upon Vishnu, who although a minor god in RV. fulfilled this requirement. Dandekar has collected abundant evidence from the Vedic hymns and rites to prove Vishnu's connection with fertility and vegetation rites.<sup>3</sup> This is also supported by his theriomorphic bird form, the eagle, which according to Frazer is a fertility symbol in many primitive vegetation rites. Another aspect of his personality which accounts for this choice is his

1. Cf. sasvatadharma (BG. XI. 18).

2. R. G. B. as an Indologist, Research Unit Publication, No. 2, BORI, Poona, 1976, p. 51.

3. Dandekar, VMT, pp. 88-89.

character as a 'preserver' or 'protector'. For a people engaged in peaceful occupations would normally expect their god to look after their yogakshema i.e. welfare and its preservation. Macdonnell has pointed out that Vishnu is described in the RV. as benevolent ( I. 156. 5 ), innocuous and bountiful ( VIII. 25. 12 ) and a generous protector ( I. 155. 4 ).<sup>1</sup> The Vedic people thereafter tried to build up his image as a solar deity and glorified his three strides, which clearly represent the sun's ascent from the eastern horizon to the highest point in heaven. This is the highest abode of Vishnu, which a man of wisdom aspires to attain ( Kath. I. 3. 9 ). He came to prominence in the days of the Brahmanas and came to be identified with sacrifice ( Ait. Br. I. 1 ). Vishnu, however, does not figure very prominently in Vaishampayana's Bharata. We find a mention of his three strides, his role as a preserver, and his identification with sacrifice only in the adhyayas added by Sauti. But he had already come to be identified with Narayana even before the days of Vaishampayana. After stating that the gods had approached Narayana with a request to make some arrangement for the governance of the world in Mbh. XII. 59. 93, Vaishampayana refers to him in the very next verse as Vishnu. Further he describes Narayana ( Mbh. XIII. 14. 142 ) as the wielder of the conch, the discus and the mace, with the eaglegod as his mount, which are the epithets of Vishnu. This seems to have been the result of a process, which had already started, of identifying the Vedic gods with the local gods to give them a mass appeal.

Further in the original Bharata itself ( Mbh. VII. 85. 91 ), we find that Narayana is mentioned along with Sankarshana. The latter was originally an agricultural deity of the Satvata race, and the special features of his cult were its indulgence in intoxicating drinks and its association with the Naga-cult. There is sufficient evidence to show that a Sankarshana cult existed independently of the Narayana cult. This is evident

1. Ibid. p. 81.

from a Mathura sculpture of the second century B. C. depicting Sankarshana by himself. Eventually in Sauti's time the two Vrishni heroes, Vaasudeva and his brother Balarama, came to be deified and worshipped as the incarnations of the Satvata gods Narayana and Sankarshana. The Ghosundi inscription in Rajputana ( 200 B. C. ) mentions the construction of a stone-wall round the hall of worship of Sankarshana and Vaasudeva. Another inscription of the 1st century B. C. at Naneghata mentions the names of Sankarshana and Vaasudeva in a dvandva compound in the opening invocations of deities.

As stated by Raychaudhuri<sup>1</sup> we have, in the worship of Sankarshana and Vasudeva, the germ of the Vyuh doctrine of the Pancharatra. In the Narayaniya section of the MD., we are told that Narada went to Shvetadvipa and sang a hymn in praise of Narayana. When Narada finished his hymn, the Supreme Being was highly pleased, and after showing him his universal form expounded to him the doctrine of Pancharatra ( MD. 326 ). The doctrine of four vyuhas seems to have come about after this creed came under the influence of the Sankhyas. Narayana himself explained to Narada the doctrine of the vyuhas in the following words : " I am the soul of the universe, beyond mind and speech and beyond the three gunas. I am the inactive Kshetrajna, who transcends the twenty-four categories of the Sankhyas. I am the Supreme Self known as Vaasudeva, who is unborn, unchangeable and eternal. I have four forms ( vyuhas ), namely, Vaasudeva, Sankarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha corresponding to the Supreme Self, the Jiva, the mind and egoism ( ahankara ). Aniruddha as ahankara is endowed with every kind of energy, and it is he, who after becoming manifest created the grandsire Brahmaa. Brahmaa then created the five great elements, earth, water, wind, light and space, and having created these five mahabhutas, he created their attributes also, namely, smell, taste, touch, sight and sound. By combining the mahabhutas, he created the whole

1. Materials for the study of the Early History of the Vaishnava Sect. p. 58.

world, consisting of the moving and non-moving objects out of the eight prakritis." Lord Narayana calls himself the Supreme Self known as Vaasudeva and seems to identify the Upanishadic Brahman as the higher form of himself ( Cf. VII. 24 ). Sankarshana as Jiva, Pradyumna as manas corresponding to the Sankhya buddhi and Aniruddha as ahankara, together with the five great elements, form the ashtadha prakriti of the Sankhyas. It is obvious that the buddhi and ahankara of the Sankhyas later came to be personified into the two vyuhas by the inclusion of Pradyumna and Aniruddha, the son and the grandson of Vaasudeva. This attempt at synthesis is expressly referred to in XII. 326. 100, which says, "This scripture called Pancharatra is a great upanishad, connected with the four Vedas and made up of Sankhya and Yoga."

Narayana then explained to Narada the doctrine of the avatars and told him of his six incarnations. This doctrine had a slow growth, as is evident from its accounts in the Mbh. Vaishampayana does not mention it in explicit terms. He merely compares the exploits of Drona in the Bharata war with those of Vishnu, when the latter fought with Hiranyaksha ( Mbh. VII. 13. 44 ) and with Hiranyakashipu ( Mbh. VIII. 164. 146 ). In the Aranyakarparva of the Mbh. Suta refers to the four incarnations of Vishnu, namely, the boar, the man-lion, and the dwarf ( 100. 10-21 ) and later to Dasharathi Rama ( 299. 18 ). Sauti also mentions the earlier three incarnations mentioned above ( VI. 63. 13 ) and states that Vaasudeva was a partial incarnation of Narayana ( I. 61. 90 ). In the Narayaniya section the Harivamshakara mentions six incarnations : Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, Bhargava Rama, Dasharathi Rama and Krishna ( XII. 326. 71. 83 ). But surprisingly he does not refer to the Fish incarnation, although he narrates the legend of the fish ( Aran. 185 ). He also mentions the last incarnation Kalki ( Aran. 188.89 ); this, however, seems to be a later interpolation, as he mentions only six incarnations in the Harivamsha. The ten incarnations which came into vogue later, beginning with Fish and Tortoise and ending with Buddha and

Kalki appear for the first time in Varaha purana. The avatara doctrine was a cardinal doctrine of the Pancharatra system, as it gave a plausible explanation for the deification of the human God Vaasudeva of the Vrishnis as Narayana.

<sup>1</sup> Although the Mokshadharma ( XII. 322, 19-23 ) alludes to the Satvata vidhi, the epic is silent about the ritualistic details of it. There is, however, some evidence that the Satvata vidhi did consist of some rites even before the Narayaniya was composed. The earliest passage in which the word Pancharatra occurs is in the Shat. Br. ( VII. 6.1 ) in which Purusha Narayaniya is said to have conceived of the idea of Pancharatra sattra i.e. sacrificial session for five days, as a means of obtaining superiority over all beings. There is a reference in MD. ( XII. 324 ), where we have the legend of Vasu, who incurred the wrath of the brahmins and was cursed by them. Once there was a dispute between the gods and the sages, whether goat's meat or corn should be offered to the gods. The sages favoured corn for that purpose, while the gods insisted upon killing a goat for that purpose. When the matter was referred to Vasu for opinion he sides with the gods, whereupon the angry sages cursed him that he would enter the bowels of earth and remain there forever. Here Vasu is said to have worshipped Hari i.e. Narayana with five sacrifices five times ( XII. 324-28 ) and was absolved from the curse by that god. It would thus appear that the sect took the name from the Pancharatra satra of Narayana, taken in a literal sense. There is a parallel for this in the Navaratra worship of the goddess Durga in the first nine days of the month of ashvin. The other explanations offered by Schruder are too fanciful to deserve any serious consideration.

Unlike the Sankhya and Yoga, the Pancharatra does not place reliance on renunciation as the only way to salvation. It is stated that after the creation of the world, gods and sages led by Brahma approached Narayana and entreated him to lay down their duties. He directed the seven sages Sana, Sanatsujata,

Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatkumara, Kapila and Sanatana to study Sankhya and Yoga and expound the way of renunciation. On the other hand, he told the gods to uphold the world, drawing strength from the sacrifices performed by human beings and instructed the seven sages Marichi, Angiras, Atri, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu and Vasishtha to study the Vedas and declare the way of action. These latter sages were known as Chitrashikhandins, who according to the Narayaniya, are the promulgators of the Pancharatra. Brahman then commanded the gods to go to their respective jurisdiction and promote the good of the world according to the ordinances.

Compassion to creatures and exclusive devotion to Narayana are the two essential elements of the Pancharatra religion. In another legend of king Vasu ( HM. 3. 23 ) we are told that Brihaspati performed a horse sacrifice for him, at which three ancient sages Ekata, Dvita and Trita were present. As the king was full of compassion, he ordered that no animals should be killed on that occasion and the oblations were prepared according to the precepts of the Aranyakas. All the gods except the Bhagavan remained present at the sacrifice to accept their shares. However, Narayana, the God of gods, remained invisible and carried off the offering without manifesting himself. When Brihaspati got annoyed and insisted upon his presence, the three ancient sages pacified him by saying that this great God can be seen only by those who are intensely devoted to Him and are fit to receive His grace. They told Brihaspati that they themselves had gone to Shvetadvipa once to see Narayana but were unable to see Him even after they had performed severe austerities over a long period. Because of its emphasis on exclusive devotion ( ekantabhakti ) to God Narayana, the Pancharatra religion is also known as ekantadharma ( HM. 336 ). Although this section was included in Mbh. by Harivamshakara, the exclusive devotion to Narayana was a central creed of the Vrishnis and was incorporated in the Gita.

## EPIC PHILOSOPHY

The Mahabharata contains a record of the philosophical systems which were current in those times. During this period we come across two ancient systems known as Sankhya with its allied system Yoga, which had earned a reputation in the early philosophical literature. Sauti ( Mbh. XII.290 ) describes the Sankhya as an ancient system with a vast literature. Another system which was current in the epic period was the Pancharatra system with the doctrines of the vyuha, avatara and exclusive devotion to god. Another doctrine which finds a mention in the epic is known as the charvakamata or the lokayata. As will be shown later, the Gita, the divine song tried to bring about a synthesis of Vedanta with Sankhya and Yoga and the Pancharatra system to the extent possible and adopted some of their doctrines and terminologies for this purpose.

The Sankhya system had a non-Vedic origin as is clear from the fact that it is mentioned separately from the Vedas in Aranyaka and M.D.<sup>1</sup> The Sankhya system has received the highest encomiums in the ancient Brahmanical and epic literature, and the Sankhya teachers have been held in high regard by the ancient thinkers. Thus the Atharvana Parishista ( X. iii. 3.4 ) mentions the Sankhya teachers Kapila, Asuri and

<sup>1</sup>. sankhyam yogam pancaratram vedaranyakam eva ca, X. III. 3.4

Panchasikha in connection with the tarpana invocation while offering libations of water to the deceased ancestors. The Ashvalayana Grihyasutra in its tarpana list gives directions for making respectful offerings to the Sankhyas and Siddhas. They are mentioned in the epic in such flattering terms as tattavchintaka, sankhyadarshin and mahaprajna. ( M.D. 301 ). The Sankhyas seem to have had such a pervasive influence over the other systems that it is said that whatever higher knowledge is to be found in the Vedas, the Sankhyas. ( i.e. the Sankhya schools ), the Yoga and the various Puranas belongs to the Sankhya thinkers.<sup>1</sup>

None of the Sankhya texts which existed before the Sankya Karika of Ishvarakrishna are extant now. Ishvarkrishna himself states that his Karika represents a summary of a work known as Shastitantra ( S.K. 72 ), but this work also is not available. Although we get references to Sankhya ideas and Yogic practices in later Upanishads such as the Katha, the Mundaka, and the Shvetasvatara, our main source of the Sankhya system in the ancient times is the Mbh. The great mass of material relating to Sankhya added by Suta in the Mokshadharma ( XII. 168-353 ) and the Anugita ( XIV. 16-50 ) shows the immense popularity which it had gained during this period. But the most ancient parts of Mbh. which relate to Sankhya and Yoga are contained in Sukanuprasna ( XII. 224-227 ), Vasishtha-KaralaJaniaka-samvada ( ibid 298-306 ) of the Mokshadharma and the Guru-shishya-samvada ( adhyayas, 35-40 ) in the Anugita added by Suta and the Bhagvadgita added by Sauti ( 450 B.C. ). We have, however, to bear in mind that the epic accounts of Sankya in the above dialogues are ascribed to Vasishtha, Yajnavalkya and Vyasa, who were staunch Vedantists.

According to the Sankhyas, the world consists of two ultimate principles, the insentient prakriti belonging to the

1. MD. 290. 103 ( Sauti ).

realm of matter and sentient purusha belonging to the realm of the spirit. According to Vasishtha, the doctrine of prakriti is based on inference. Thus from the material objects that we see in this world, we infer the existence of gross elements, from gross elements of egoism, from egoism of the great principle ( mahat ) and from the latter of prakriti, where one has to stop to avoid infinite regress. The prakriti is, therefore, described as alinga i.e. without a distinguishing mark ( SM. XII. 291.42 ). This eightfold prakriti gives rise to sixteen vikaras or effects, namely, the five organs of sense, the five organs of action, the mind and the five objects of senses. In addition to these twenty-four categories, there is the twenty-fifth category, the purusha who is the conscious Self. Suta further tells us that the conception of purusha is also based on inference. But the Sankhya doctrine of pararthatva that every composite thing such as the body or the mind exists for another entity distinct from it, does not find a mention in the epic. The eternal purusha is distinct from the ever-changing prakriti and remains unaffected even when in conjunction with it like a lotus leaf on water. The doctrine of gunas as qualities of prakriti was known to Suta, who gives an elaborate description of the psychic qualities which arise from the predominance of one quality over the other two in a person ( XIV. 36-39 ). Man is said to suffer bondage so long as he identifies purusha with prakriti or its gunas through ignorance, but attains emancipation through discriminating knowledge between the two. Suta adds that Vasishtha further tells Janaka ( XII. 296 ) that when the Self realises his true nature through discriminating knowledge, he is to be regarded as the twenty-sixth principle, which is the eternal, stainless, primeval Bramhan. This twenty-sixth principle is the pure supreme Self without attributes, and when the individual Self realises himself as different from prakriti, he becomes liberated and beholds the Supreme Self ( SM. XII. 305. 74 ).

Suta then proceeds to describe how this process of

evolution takes place ( XII. 291 ). The formless Brahman, which is self-existent and bountiful, creates the first embodied being of vast proportions, of infinite deeds and of cosmic form ( vishvarupa ). This First-born is radiant, immutable and possessed of eight yogic powers<sup>1</sup> and is known as Hiranyagarbha. He has his hands and feet stretching in all directions, with eyes, ears, mouths and heads everywhere. In the yogic scripture he is known as the great principle ( mahat ), Virinchi and the First-born. In the Sankhya he is known by diverse names. Undergoing modifications, Hiranyagarbha, also known as Prajapati, produces the principle of egoism from which arise the five great elements. From them evolves the vikara group, namely, the mind, the ten sense organs and the five objects of senses. In the same adhyaya, Suta further explains how the dissolution of the universe takes place after a long period. A yuga consists of twelve thousand years and four such yugas taken a thousand times make a kalpa, which forms a day of Brahmaa, his night being of equal dimension. At the end of Brahmaa's life, the dissolution of the world takes place and the process of creation starts afresh.<sup>2</sup>

The accounts of Yoga as given by Suta and Sauti in the Mokshadharma are more or less similar. Although Yajnavalkya points out that the Vedas knew of the eightfold Yoga ( SM. XII. 304.7 ), it is clear that it could not refer to the ashtangayoga of Patanjali, of whom there is no mention in the epic. Suta states that meditation is an obligatory practice with the yogis and is their superb power. According to him, meditation is of two kinds, the one involving the regulation of breath and the

1. These yogic powers are given in the following verse :

*anima laghima praptih prakamyam mahima tatha  
isiteam ca rasitvam ca tatha kumavasayita* ||

They are : (1) the power of becoming as small as an atom, (2) the power of levitation, (3) the power of obtaining anything at will, (4) irresistible will, (5) the power of increasing size, (6) supremacy, (7) the power of subduing others, (8) suppression of desire.

2. Cf. BG. VIII. 16-19 ( Sauti ).

other concentration of mind ( SM. XII. 294. 8 ), which constitute the two main characteristics of Yoga ( SM. XII. 304. 9 ). Suta then goes on to describe how one should practise meditation. He says that after giving up all attachments and observing moderation in diet, a person should subjugate his senses and fix his mind on the Self during the first and last part of the night. For this purpose, after withdrawing his senses from the sense-objects he should assume a posture as motionless as a block of stone and try to calm down his mind with the help of his understanding. When he does not hear nor smell, nor taste nor see, when he is not sensitive to any touch, when he cherishes no thought and is not conscious of anything, he is said to be perfect in Yoga. At this time he shines like a lamp in a windless place<sup>1</sup> and becomes united with Brahman. Then the Self reveals himself in the heart of the yogi like a blazing fire or like the bright sun or like a flash of lightning in the sky. By such practices the yogi succeeds in realising the Self that transcends decay and death ( PM. XII. 309. 13-25 ).

It is thus obvious that what the epic describes is a theistic Sankhya Yoga system, which deals with Sankhya and Yoga and treats them as one. Suta asserts that he who sees Sankhya and Yoga as the same and that both had the same goal namely freedom from death, know the truth ( SM. XII. 293, 304 ). This is also view of the Gita ( V. 5 ).

But there are also a number of passages in the Mbh., which indicate that they are two ancient systems.<sup>2</sup> In the same adhyaya we are told that there are five systems, namely Sankhya, Yoga, Pancaratra, the Vedas and the Pashupata, and that they hold different views, nanamatani ( VM. 59 ). It is also said that Sankhya and Yoga were originally declared by two different sages, Kapila and Hiranyagarbha respectively. This finds independent corroboration in the Ahirbudhnyasamhita

1. Cf. BG. VI. 19

2. Sankhyam ca yogam ca saratane dve, SM. 337. 68.

( XII.32 ) which states that Hiranyagarbha had disclosed the entire system of Yoga in two different texts<sup>1</sup> nirodhasamhita and karmasamhita. XII. 289. 9 ( Sauti ) tells us that Sankhya and Yoga do not have the same system ( darshanam na samain tayoh ) and gives reasons for holding this view. There we are told that both claim superiority for their own system and advance arguments in support of their claim. The followers of Yoga say that their system is superior, because, they ask, ' how can the anisvara Sankhya win release ? ' They further argue that only those who undergo the Yogic discipline acquire the necessary power or strength to destroy the bonds of action due to greed. Nilakantha<sup>2</sup> explains that the expression anisvarah katham mucyed suggests that it is difficult to attain liberation without God. He further adds that they adduce the above reasons to establish the excellence of their system svapakshotkarshaya ca. Hopkins<sup>3</sup> has rightly suggested that this passage is a clear indication of an atheistic Sankhya.

Prof. S. N. Dasgupta has advanced the view that Sankhya was probably theistic originally and became atheistic for the first time in the Sankhya school of Charaka and Panchasikha and became confirmed in this regard finally in Ishvarakrishna's Sankhya-karika. In support of his view Dasgupta<sup>4</sup> cites the contents of Shastitantra; an old Sankhya text, as given in the Ahirbudhnya Samhita. In this text, the topics of Sashtitantra are grouped into thirty-two original principles ( prakritamandala ) and twenty-eight derivative principles ( vaikritamandala ). It is not known what exactly is the basis of Dasgupta's view that the Sankhya was theistic, but if it is the expression tatra 'dyam brahmatantram tu, it may be mentioned that the word brahmaa was also in current use to denote prakriti, and the mere mention

1. adan hiranyagarbhana dve prokie yogasamhita

2. tsvarām vina moksadaurlabhyasucanat. Nil. Mbh. XII. 300. 2, Chitrashala Press.

3. E. W. Hopkins, *The Great Epic of India*, pp. 104-106

4. S. N. Dasgupta. *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, Cambridge 1922, pp. 219-220 ( See also M. D. Ramanujacharya and Dr. Schrader, *Ahirbudhnya Samhita*, pp. 108-110 )

of brahmatantra is not sufficient to prove that Sankhya was theistic. Both the series given in the Ahirbudhnya Samhita are not to be found among the tattvas usually mentioned in the Sankhya texts, especially in the Sankhyakarika, which as its author says, is a summary of Shastitantra ( SK. 72 ). In his commentary on the karika, Vachaspati quotes a verse from Rajavartika,<sup>1</sup> which enumerates the sixty topics of Shastitantra as follows : (1) the existence of prakriti, (2) its oneness, (3) its objectiveness, (4) its distinctness (from purusha), (5) its purposiveness (for the sake of purusha), (6) plurality of purushas, (7) isolation (of purusha with prakriti at the beginning), (9) duration, (10) inactivity of the purusha; these ten form the original categories. In addition to these five kinds of error, nine kinds of contentment and twenty-eight forms of power make up sixty topics. Vachaspati says that these sixty topics are dealt with in the seventy karikas, which represent a complete system. The first ten topics known as maulikarthas are referred to in the glosses on Sankhyakarika by Jayamangala, Mathara and other Sankhya texts<sup>2</sup> included in the Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, No. 246.

Thus the Sankhya differed not only from Yoga but also consisted of different schools, which had different terminologies and had different number of tattvas or principles.<sup>3</sup> Mbh. itself uses the word Sankhya in the plural and the word Yoga in the singular in MD.<sup>4</sup> The Mokshadharma is found to employ different terminologies to denote the two ultimate principles of Sankhyas. Probably the terms kshra and akshara belonged to an earlier school of Sankhya, as they occur in the Shvet. Up. and the Vasista-Karalajanaka-Samvada. Ashvaghosha employs the two terms vyakta and avyakta in expounding the philosophy of

1. The author of Rajavartika is not known. Garbe thinks that Bhoja is its author. Tattvakaumuda, Poona Oriental Series No. 10, Poona 1934, p. 29.

2. Sankhyasangraha : (i) sankhya-tattva-vivecana ( p.22 ), (ii) Tattvayatharthayadipana ( p. 80 ), (iii) Tattvasamsasutratravitti ( p. 135 ).

3. Suta lists different numbers of tattvas at different places, at XII. 267. 28. 267. 30.

4. vedesu sankhyasu tathaiva yoge, Mbh. XII. 290.103 ( Sauti ).

Araada, the former Sankhya teacher of Buddha. Yet another Sankhya school is found to employ the terminology of adhibhuta and adhyatma, based on an analysis of the physical and the mental worlds and the interrelationship between the two. In the account of the Sankhya given by Ashvaghosha, we do not find a mention of gunas in the sense of qualities or constituents of prakriti. He, however, refutes the doctrine of gunas in his *Budhhacharita* XXVI. 104 from which it appears that the theory of gunas had received an elaborate treatment in yet another school of Sankhya. Some of these different schools continued to exist even in later times, for in his commentary on *Yoga Sutra* II. 23, Vyasa mentions eight different theories about the cause of conjunction of purusha with prakriti, and Vachaspati in his *Tattvavaishtaradi* explains that all these alternatives are taken from Sankhya texts.

The development of Sankhya and Yoga seems to have proceeded independently of each other, and their basic differences came to be crystallised in the *Yogasutras* of Patanjali (1st century A.D.) and in the *Sankhya-karika* of Ishvarakrishna (4th century A.D.). But even after the composition of the *Sankhya-karika*, Paramartha (6th century A.D.) tells us that there were eighteen schools of Sankhya in his time. The *Sankhyakarika* was a landmark in the historical development of Sankhya, as it unified all the differing Sankhya schools and rendered all previous Sankhya texts redundant. The unifying principle was provided by the doctrine of satkarya,<sup>1</sup> which is conspicuous by its absence in the epic and the *Bhagavadgita*.

The school of Varshaganya had given some thought to the problem of causation, as is seen from Vasubandhu's quotation (*Abhidharmakosha*, IV. 64) 'That which is, exists; that which is not does not exist. That which is not does not

1. Early sankhya, London 1937, p. 88. According to Johnston, this doctrine was not known to Nagarjuna and so could not have arisen before the 3rd century A.D., pp. 66-67.

come into existence, and that which is, is not destroyed' (Cf. BG. II. 16). Johnston rightly describes this 'as a half-way house' to the later theory of satkaryavada, which states that the effect exists potentially in the cause. The gross elements are then regarded as the effect of subtle elements, the tanmatras, namely sound, colour, touch, taste and smell, which are now included in the prakriti group. On the other hand, the gross elements, space, wind, fire, water and earth, which later figure in the prakriti group in the epic Sankhya, are now relegated to the vikara group. With the development of this causal theory, the order of evolution in the pre-epic Sankhya starts with prakriti as the primeval cause of the material universe, evolving successively into the great principle (mahat), egoism (ahankara) and the five tanmatras, which are the effects of prakriti and causes of sixteen vikritis. These sixteen vikritis or effects are the ten senses, the mind and five gross elements. The gunas, as existing potentially in the prakriti are now regarded as the constituents of prakriti, latent in its state of equilibrium as well as its evolved projects.

It will thus be seen that pre-epic Sankhya differed from classical Yoga in two respects mentioned by epic. Pre-epic Sankhya was atheistic and regarded knowledge as the exclusive means of liberation. In Karika 65 Ishvarakrishna states that prakriti binds herself by the seven aspects and liberates herself by one, which is evidently nothing else but discriminating knowledge. According to him this knowledge could be attained by the study of the Sankhya scripture; pre-epic Yoga, on the other hand, is theistic, although its concept of God is that he is only a distinguished Self (purushavishesha) untouched by actions and afflictions etc. The God of Patanjali is not the Upanishadic Brahman, which is the cause of the origination and dissolution of the world. Yoga also places great emphasis on the method of meditation for overcoming the bonds of actions and past impressions. Again while the epic Sankhya

brings out very clearly the difference between prakriti and purusha it does not explain why these two distinct elements should come into conjunction. Patanjali, following Varshaganya, explains it by the doctrine of avidya, according to which avidya, ignorance is the cause of conjunction. Ishvarakrishna, on the other hand, adopts the purusharthata theory that prakriti works to bring about either of the two goals of life, namely enjoyment and emancipation ( *Yoga Sutra* ii-23 ). Perhaps this doctrine originated with Panchashikha, whom Ishvarakrishna mentions among the Sankhya teachers.

From this it is evident that at least the pre-epic Sankhya and Yoga were different. We have, therefore, to find out in what sense both Vasishtha and Yajnavalkya affirm that they are the same. Evidently the epic Sankhya-Yoga was the result of a conscious effort to bring about a synthesis of Sankhya and Yoga with Vedanta. Vasishtha and Yajnavalkya added the twenty-sixth principle Brahman, to the twenty-five principles of the Sankhyas and made their prakriti subseuent to it. They also adopted the yogic method of meditation as the method for concentrating the mind on the Self. With these two major changes, the major differences between the two disappeared, and so they could claim that Sankhya and Yoga were the same and only the ignorant thought that they were different.

The Sankhyas had also given considerable thought to the theory of action in general and the Vedic ritual in particular. They were totally opposed to the sacrificial rites as they involved destruction of life. They held that every kind of activity proceeds from prakriti or more specifically from its manifest forms and that actions which are produced by them cannot lead to the realisation of the Self. The Sankhyas, therefore, believed that liberation could be attained only through knowledge preceded by renunciation. In his *Grihyasutra* iv. 16.1, Boudhayana lays down the initiation ceremony for a monk as fixed by Kapila. In his *Dharmasutra* ii.

6.7, he further tells us that different ashramas came to be devised by Kapila, son of Pralhada, because of his hostility to the Vedic gods and that sane men should, therefore, pay no heed to them. By this Boudhayana seems to suggest that there is only one order, that of the householder and the intention of Kapila in devising the ashramas was to wean away the people from their householders' duties and to deprive the gods of their customary sacrificial offerings and make them less powerfull. This would seem to indicate that renunciation was originally a Sankhya creed and, due to its pervasive influence, it later came to be adopted as the fourth ashrama. We shall show later that the main tenets of the theistic Sankhya and Yoga as mentioned by Suta were incorporated in the *Gita* by Sauti.

The Lokayata professed a purely materialistic doctrine, which as R. D. Ranade puts it, ' has had the misfortune of being known to us only through the version of its opponents.'<sup>1</sup> Sauti calls Charvaka an asura in the garb of a brahmin ( *Mbh.* XII. 39.22 ), but does not give us any account of his creed. The only clear and coherent account of Lakayata doctrine is given by Haribhadra, a Jain monk ( 528 A. D. ) and Madhavacharya, a Vedantist. Haribhadra summarises the Lakayata doctrine in his *Shaddarshanasamuccaya* ( verse 80 ) and ascribes to it a purely negative attitude. According to it, he says, there is neither self nor liberation, neither right nor wrong, nor any after-effects of virtue and vice. Madhavacharya in his *Sarvadarshanasaṅgraha* says that it holds that perception is the only source of knowledge and so denies the existence of any object belonging to another world. It recognises only four original principles, namely, air, light, water and earth, rejecting akasha as it is only known through inference. When these four elements became transformed into a body, intelligence is produced in the same way as intoxicating power results from the mixture of certain ingredients. No intelligence survives after death, and there is no

<sup>1</sup>. Belwalkar and Ranade, *History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II ( 1927 ), p. 459.

evidence that consciousness exists apart from the body. The body itself as distinguished by the attributes of intelligence is the self. There is, therefore, no heaven, no liberation, nor any soul in the next world, and so wealth and satisfaction of desire are the only ends of human life.

The earliest mention of this doctrine is in the Chandogya Up. VIII. 8, where asura Virocana appears to have held that there is no Self apart from the body. The Lokayata professed a purely materialistic doctrine, which as R. D. Ranade puts it, has had the misfortune of being known only through the versions of its opponents.<sup>1</sup> Sauti calls it Charvaka and it is described as the doctrine of the asuras, and it is further stated that whoever follows it will perish. This, however, seems to be the view of a school of asuras, for, as we saw earlier (p. 35) many asuras worshipped Varuna as the Supreme God, the controller of morality and the austere Lord Shiva and practised austerity. The Shv. Up. 1.2 refers to the doctrine of chance, which ascribes whatever order we see in the world to mere accident. This yadricchavada seems to be the precursor of the Lokayata doctrine, which also holds that the events of life are accidental. The doctrine seems to have gained popularity in the times of Sauti who mentions that when Dushyanta went to the hermitage of Kanya he found that lokayatikas were taking part along with others in recitations. Panini was acquainted with this doctrine, as lokayata is the second word in the ukthadigana, referred to in his sutra IV. 2.60. Kautilya in his Arthashastra I.2 includes Lokayata along with Sankhya and Yoga in Anvikshiki, which means logic, philosophy. He thus writes about Anvikshiki : "Philosophy, viewing other sciences in the light of reason, does good to the world, steadies the mind in weal and woe, and imparts skills in knowledge, speech and action. Philosophy is ever declared to be the lamp of all lores." In one of the dialogues of Buddha we are told that mastery of the three

1. Belwalkar and Ranade, History of Indian Philosophy, Vol. II (1927), p. 459.

Vedas, the ritual, phonology, exegesis as the fourth, legends the fifth, and proficiency in grammar and Lokayata are the characteristics of a brahmin.<sup>1</sup> There is, however, at another place a slightly derogatory statement, which merely says that they are 'addicted to the use of wrangling'.<sup>2</sup> Patanjali, in his Mahabhasya (Sutra 7.3.45) states that Bhaguri expounds the lokayata doctrine. This would go to show that the Lokayata had not only become prevalent among the people as its name suggests but had also earned the recognition of other schools of thought.

In later literature, however, we find that the Lokayata school gets a mixed reception. But as pointed out by Soletore<sup>3</sup>, the lokayatas were very active in Karnataka from the tenth to the fifteenth century A. D. and had established five well-known centres of learning there. We have epigraphical evidence about them as also the victories scored by Hindu and Jain teachers over the champions of rival doctrines including the lokayata. We find from a record dated 1381 A. D. that Bharatitirtha, head of the Shringeri Math, was praised for establishing the Advaita doctrine after refuting other schools including the school of Charvakas. This is how his brother and successor Madhvacarya came to be acquainted with the lokayata school and began his work on Sarvadarshanasangraha, with a chapter on the lokayata doctrine. Soletore concludes his article with the observation that 'the Lokayatas were a most vigorous body of philosophers, whose presence was acknowledged with respect both by the Hindus and the Jainas for more than five centuries.'<sup>4</sup>

Both the critics of the lokayata school, Haribhadra and Madhvacarya, concede that it is a darshana or a philosophical system. They are critical of it, because of (1) their denial of all

1. Rhys Davids, Dialogues of the Buddha, Vol. II, part I, London 1969, pp. 138, 139.

2. Ibid., p. 14

3. ABORI. Silver Jubilee Volume, p. 389.

4. Ibid., p. 397.

means of knowledge other than perception and (2) their eat-drink and make-merry for tommorrow-we-die view of life. As regards the former, it is difficult to believe that anyone would be naive enough to dismiss all forms of inference without which even practical life would become impossible. That the lokayatikas admitted inference within the range of empirically known world is clear from the views of Purandara, whom Tucci describes as an author of the Charvaka school, Dasgupta<sup>1</sup> sums up Purāndara's view in this regard as follows :

" Purandara, however, a follower of Charvaka ( probably of the seventh century ), admits the usefulness of inference in determining the nature of all worldly things where perceptual experience is available, but inference cannot be employed for establishing any dogma regarding the transcendental world, or life after death or the laws of karma which cannot be available to ordinary perceptual experience." It seems probable that the Lokayatika ascribed validity only to inference based on observed facts and rejected all conclusions derived from inference based on a priory assumptions. Logic seems to have been a strong point of the lokayatikas, as in a record dated 1100 A. D. a Jain ascetic Gopanandi is said to have worsted six rival schools of logic<sup>2</sup>, namely, Mimansa, Vaisheshika, Bauddha, Nyaya, Lokayata and Sankhya.

As regards the charge of moral laxity, Madhavacharya mentions the Charvaka dictum ' let us live happily and feed on ghee even though we have to run into debt for it.' In this regard, Dasgupta refers to Gunaratna, who in his commentary on Shaddarshanasamucchaya speaks of Charvakas as a nihilistic sect, who only eat well but do not accept the existence of virtue and vice.<sup>3</sup> According to Gunaratna, they ( the Charvakas ) drank wine and ate meat and were given to unrestricted sex indulgence. Each year they gathered together

1. A History of Indian Philosophy, Vol. III ( Cambridge 1940 ), p. 536.

2. ABORI, Silver Jubilee Volume, pp. 394-95.

3. A History of Indian Philosophy, Vol. III ( Cambridge 1940 ), p. 533.

on a particular day and had unrestricted intercourse with women. They behaved like common people and for that reason they were called lokayatika. Since sexual promiscuity is restricted to a particualr day, it is obvious that it formed an essential part of a fertility rite. Fertility rites were performed all over the world by ancient tribes and were based on the belief that the ' marriage of trees and plants could not be fertile without the real union of the human sexes.'<sup>1</sup> The Charvaka episode in Mbh. XII. 39 shows that an enraged Charvaka accused Yudhishthira of killing his kinsmen, which was considered as a heinous offence against the sacred ties of kinship. This suggests that while the lokayatikas did not accept the moral tenets of the Vedic scriptures, they observed the customs and morals of a tribal society. It is clear that the lokayatikas had progressed from the egoistic to tribal hedonism, which considered the happiness of the members of one's own tribe as the ' good '.

The Upanishads were followed by the Bhagavadgita, which embodies the quintessance of the Upanishadic teaching. The Gita does not form part of the scriptures, but the upanishads, the Gita and the Brahmasutra form the triple canon ( Prasthanatrayi ) of the Hindu religion and are regarded as authoritative on the fundamental tenets of Vedanta. Any teaching, which does not conform to these tenets, is considered heterodox and not worthy of notice. On the other hand, those who have studied this triple canon and written commentaries on them are called acharyas and held in high regard by the Hindus. The Gita has brought about a synthesis among the doctrines of Vedanta, Sankhya-yoga and Pancharatra systems, which were prevalent in its times. One could almost say without exaggeration that the Gita was the first ' ecumenical effort ' to bring those different philosophical systems under the banner of Krishna-Vaasudeva, who had come to be accepted as an incarnation of God in the time of Sauti ( 450 B. C. ).

1. Frazer : *The Golden Bough*, Abridged Edition, London, 1933, pp. 135-36.

On the other hand, those who have studied this triple canon and have written commentaries on them are called acharyas and held in high regard by the Hindus. They have written commentaries on the triple canon to demonstrate that they contain or support their particular doctrines. The earliest commentary of the Gita, which is available now, is that of Shri Shankara (Seventh century A.D.). He, however, refers to some *prima facie* views held by a predecessor, who is commonly acknowledged to be Bodhayana. Shri Shankara was followed by a succession of acharyas and they have tried to interpret the Gita according to their own schools of thought. Among them are Shri Ramanuja, Shri Nimbark, Shri Madhva, Shri Vallabha and Madhusudana. These commentators of the Gita, however, lost sight of the fact that the Gita had tried to synthesize the prevailing philosophical systems and vied with one another to establish that their own interpretation conveyed the sole message of the Gita.

The question whether the Gita was composed by one or more authors has been a matter of dispute among the scholars. Some western scholars, supported by a few Indian scholars, have advanced various theories of the multiple authorship of the Gita. To mention the more important, Humboldt, Holtzman, Hopkins, Garbe, Farquhar and Rudolph Otto among the western scholars and S. D. Pendse, G. V. Ketkar and G. S. Khair among the Indian scholars have held that additions had come to be made to Gita from time to time; firstly, they argue, the poem differs in style from beginning to end, so that the Gita cannot be regarded as the work of a single author on consideration of its metrical form. Secondly, the poem attempts to reconcile many different points of view, so that it abounds in 'contradictions', 'puzzling anomalies' and 'philosophical inconsistencies' and the different meanings given to the same words are indicative of 'its patch-work' origin. There is, however, no agreement among the different scholars regarding the size and form of the original Gita.

Humboldt was inclined to regard the original Gita as closing with adhyaya xi and the last seven adhyayas as later additions. Holtzman held that the present Gita was originally a pantheistic poem in the original Mbh. which later became a Vishnuite work. Oldenberg rejected the last six adhyayas of the Gita and thought that the poetical passages were more original than the doctrinal ones. According to Rudolf Otto (1930), the original Gita contained only 133 verses and did not contain the doctrinal sections. Hopkins regarded the Gita as a Krishnite version of an older Vishnute poem, which was originally an unsectarian work, perhaps a later Upanishad. According to Farquhar, the Gita was an old upanishad later than the Shvetashvatara, which was afterwards adapted to the Krishna cult. Garbe held that it was originally a Sankhya tract, with which Vasudeva Krishna cult came to be identified later. He thought that all the Vedantic passages were later interpolations. On the other hand, G. S. Khair thought that the distribution of the Sankhya passages in the different adhyayas suggested that they were later interpolations made at different times. He considered that the Gita was written by three poet-philosophers during three different periods for different types of audiences. It is obvious that these widely held different views about the Gita are based on subjective appreciation of internal evidence. A statistical study of the anushtubh style of the Gita adhyayas undertaken by the author showed that the variations of this style as between the eighteen adhyayas were not significant to justify the assumption of its multiple authorship.<sup>1</sup> From the anushtubh style of the Gita, it was found that it disclosed the B-styles, which showed that it was composed by Sauti in 450 B.C. This incidentally explains the unsystematic manner in which the doctrine of the Gita has been presented.<sup>2</sup>

Now it is evident that even a talented bard like Sauti could

1. MGG. Appendix, I-A, pp. 171-175.

2. MGG. Intr. X

not have known the then existing schools of thought and worked out a brilliant synthesis like the Gita. The question naturally arises who could have given him the inspiration to undertake this stupendous work and provide him with the requisite background knowledge for that purpose. We find the answer in Mbh. 1.4, which tells us that Sauti had gone to recite the Mbh. at the twelve year sacrificial session held by Shaunaka in the Naimisha forest. When Shaunaka met Sauti, he said that his father Suta also used to visit him and regale him with stories of divine kings and primeval races of wise men. (Mbh. 1.5). Thus both father and son had come under the strong influence of Kulapati Shaunaka. Shaunaka, as his name indicates, was a descendant of Shunaka, who belonged to one branch of Bhrigu clan. As observed by Dr. Sukthankar (CSM. p. 335). "Dharma and Niti elements are just the two topics in which the Bhrigus had specialised and with which their names are prominently associated." One may, therefore, reasonably guess that both Suta and Sauti had gathered their material for writing the passages on politics, religion and philosophy in the epic from their mentor Shaunaka. This seems to bear out to some extent the view of Dr. De Smat<sup>1</sup> that the author of the Gita appears to have been a Bhargave brahmin, who was a genius whether as a poet, a religious man or a philosopher.

On the other hand, Krishna is represecuted in the Mbh. as having told the Gita to Arjuna on the battlefield before the start of the war. While this is clearly incredible, it embodies a tradition about the identity of the Mbh. hero with the author of the Gita. This traditional view is held by most of the Indian scholars and some western scholars, such as Grierson, Garbe and Von Schroeder. However, Max Muller denies and Macdonell and Keith doubt the identity of the two Krishnas.<sup>2</sup> Keith, who has dealt with this subject at some length, observes

1. R. V. De Smat, *Gita in Time and Beyond Time* in Kulkarni, ed. *The Bhagavadgita and the Bible*, Delhi, 1972, pp. 1, 2.  
2. *Vedic Index*, Vol. I, p. 184.

as follows. " In the Chhandogya Up., we hear of a pupil Krishna Devakiputra of Ghore Angiras, who is credited with certain doctrines. We are asked to believe that this is an historical reference to Krishna of the epic. It is a much more credible hypothesis on the theory of the identity of the Krishnas that we have in this Krishna a euhemerison, a reduction to human rank of a tribal god, and it is the only hypothesis which does not raise serious difficulties as to the date of the divinity of Krishna and his appearance in the epic.<sup>1</sup> He further remarks that " the similarity between the names may be accidental as in the case of the Patanjalis of the Mahabhashya and of the Yoga.<sup>2</sup>

But his main objective against the identity of the two Krishnas is that while the Krishna of Chhandogya Up. is a human teacher, Krishna of the Gita reveals himself as the Supreme Being and his divine nature is clearly known throughout the epic. The first two objections can be disposed of easily. According to Dr. Dandekar<sup>3</sup> chronology does not go against the assumption that Krishna of the Chhandogya Up. is the same as the Mbh. hero. Further it seems somewhat improbable that these could be two persons at about the same time with identical names, with their mothers also bearing the uncommon name Devaki. As regards the last objection, we find that the divine character of Krishna came to be established only in the time of Sauti. (450 B. C.)

Again some scholars are inclined to doubt whether the Mbh. hero, the propounder of the Gita and the favourite and lover of cow-herdesses in Gokula are one and the same person. Winternitz, to quote one of them, thought that it was more likely that there were two or several traditional Krishnas, who were merged into one deity at a later date.<sup>4</sup> There is sufficient

1. JRAS. 1915, p. 548.

2. JRAS 1915, pp. 249, 250.

3. Dr. R. N. Dandekar, *Vaishnavism and Shaivism* in R. G. B., p. 35.

4. Winternitz, HIL, Vol. I, p. 406.

evidence to show that the Gopalakrishna element was incorporated into the Vaasudeva Krishna cult at a much later date; the references to Krishna as a cowherd are to be found for the first time in Sauti's redaction of the epic ( Mbh. II. 38 ). In his fireade against Krishna at the Rajasuya sacrifice, Shishupala, King of Cedi, called Krishna, a cowherd ( *gopa* ), but is silent about his relations with the gopis. The Vulgate passage ( II-68, 41-46 ) containing the word *gopijanavallabha*, which Garbe thought to be an old part of the epic, does not find a place in the critical edition and so is a much later interpolation. The stories of Krishna's relations with gopis do not figure in the *Buddhajatakas*<sup>1</sup> and are to be found only in the *Harivamsha* and later Puranas. The legends which connect him with Radha are still of a later date, as Radha's name occurs for the first time in the ninth century A. D.<sup>2</sup>

It is pertinent to note that Krishna's early life as cowherd finds a mention in the epic only after the nomadic tribe of the Abhiras came on the scene. Suta mentions them for the first time in the *Mausalaparva* ( adhyaya 8 ), where they are said to have waylaid Arjuna, while he was escorting, after the death of Krishna, Vrishni widows and orphans, and decamped with their women and treasures. The abhiras followed the profession of cowherds, which is still the main occupation of their descendants, now known as ahirs. As pointed out by Dr. Dandekar, there can be little doubt that the cowherd child-god Krishna originated among the nomadic community of the abhiras. It, therefore, seems evident that the legends which had grown round this child-god of the Abhiras were incorporated in the early life of Krishna-Vasudeva in the *Harivamsha* by its author in 200 B.C.<sup>3</sup>

It seems strange that after extolling the path of action to

1. Raichaudhuri, EHVS, p. 73.

2. Chattarji, BSOS VIII, pp. 457-476, quoted by Pusalkar, SEP ( 1963 ), p. 111.

3. See BGS, pp. 15-16.

Arjuna throughout, the Lord should conclude with the advice to give up action altogether. This advice would have suited Arjuna very well, as he wanted to avoid the destructive war at any cost. That he did not take it in that sense is clear from the fact that he decided to accept the advice of Krishna to fight. The phrase *sarvadharman parityajya*, therefore, means not renunciation of action but abandonment of its fruit ( *phalatyaga* ). Shri Ramanuja takes *parityajya* to mean 'renouncing the fruit and agency of action ' as taught in ( xviii.9-11 ) Shri Madhava also states that the renunciation of dharma here means the relinquishment of their fruit.

Among the divine endowments the study of scriptures, sacrifices and giving of alms are the religious duties relevant for the man. Giving of help to less fortunate fellow-beings without expectation of a return has an ennobling effect on character, but it should be given to deserving persons at the proper time and place. Although the Gita talks about sacrificial rites, which were the form of worship in those days, their injunction would apply to ritual worship of every kind. Thus the Lord does not disapprove of ritual worship, but says that one should undertake religious duties with faith but without expectation of any reward. The Gita does not attach much importance to the material sacrifice ( *dravyayajna* ), but says that any worship or spiritual practice becomes a *yajna* par excellence, if it is undertaken without the desire for a reward. Thus the Gita includes in this wider concept of *yajna* all spiritual practices such as scriptural study, austerities, self-control and pursuit of knowledge.

No one can follow his favourite propensity to the exclusion of moral values without grave danger to his spiritual progress. A purely intellectual approach to life breeds egoism and indifference to human suffering. Pure activism is likely to blunt moral sensibilities and make one forget that the goal of life is not success and prosperity, but God-realisation. Pure devotion, which is not based on the knowledge that we are all

children of one God, breeds intolerance, bigotry and fundamentalist attitudes. The lives of our great sages and saints show that they have followed a combination of the three paths. Shri Shankara, in spite of his predilection for knowledge based on renunciation, was a great activist. He travelled through the length and breadth of the country and established four maths for the propagation of his advaita doctrine. He was also a devotee as is seem from his exquisite devotional songs addressed to different deities. Patanjali, who laid great emphasis on the Yoga of meditation, recommended yoga of action ( kriyayoga ) and divine worship ( ishvarapranidhana ) as aids to meditation. In more recent times, shri Jnaneshvara, the great saint of Alandi ( Maharashtra ), began as a hathayogi of the Natha Sampradaya, practised the way of knowledge and became a jnani-bhakta. Shri Ramakrishna started as a devotee of goddess Kali, became a jnani-bhakta and taught that social and humanitarian service was also a form of divine worship. His desciiple Svami Vivekanand not only established the Ramakrishna Math but also the Ramakrishna mission by adopting the mottos of the liberation of the Self and welfare of the world.<sup>1</sup> Thus wisdom is the supreme means of liberation, but is not exclusive of service to humanity and devotion to God.

**BHAGAVADGITA**

We shall now proceed to consider the doctrinal contents of the Bhagavadgita, the divine song. As Hill has pointed out<sup>1</sup> there is doctrinal similarity between the Gita and the Chhandogya Up. in which Krishna is said to have received mystical and moral instruction from Ghora Angiras. This instruction contains a comparison of man's life with sacrifice, which frequently occurs in the Gita. His privation is equated with initiation ( diksha ) and his enjoyment with the upasada ceremonies and chantings. In the upasada ceremonies the sacrificer is permitted to break his fast with milk. Virtues such as austirity, charity, uprightness, non-violence and truthfulness take the place of gifts ( dakshina ) given to the priest. When he procreates, that' is said to be his new birth. Death is the final bath ( avabhritha ) of purification. The sage ended his instruction with the following words : ' You are indestructible; you are unshakable; you are the very essence of life. ' Having heard this Krishna is said to have lost all thirst for knowledge. Krishna must have learnt from Ghore Angiras all the upanishadic lore and not merely his special mistruction referred to in the Chhandogya Up.

In the Gita too we find that disinterested work is regarded as a kind of sacrifice, ( yoga-yojna, iv.28 ) and the spiritual

1. atmano mokshartham jagaddhitaya cha.

1. Hill, The Bhagavadgita, London, p. 13

practices mentioned by Ghore Angiras are included among the divine endowments ( xvi. 1-3 ). We thus find in the Gita a full statement of the doctrines said to have been imparted by Ghore Angiras to Krishna. This would lend weight to the view that this Devakiputra Krishna was the same as the Vrishni hero, who had advised Arjuna to fight manfully and wrest the kingdom from the hands of the Kauravas. As regards the last objection, we find that the divine character of Lord Krishna had come to be established only in the time of Sauti. This also disposes of the point raised by De, who has tried to prove that the two Krishnas were different.<sup>1</sup>

It was only during Sauti's time that Krishna came to be identified first with the two divine sages Nara and Narayana and then as an incarnation of Vishnu-Narayana. In the Vamshavataraṇa ( I. 61 ) it is stated that Vasudeva was a partial incarnation of Narayana, God of gods. This is repeated in the Sabhaparva ( II. 33 ), where Sauti stated that Narayana, the lord of the world, was born in the house of the Yadus. When sage Kanva advised Duryodhana to come to terms with Pandavas ( V. 103.35 ), he said that Krishna was none else than Vishnu, the bearer of the disc and the mace. Bhishma also told Duryodhana that Vaasudeva was Narayana and should not be disregarded as an ordinary human being. In the Krishnanamastuti ( XII. 43 ), Yudhishtira sang a hymn of praise to Krishna, identifying him with Vashnu and calling him Shipivishta, which epithet was exclusively employed in the Veda with reference to Vishnu.<sup>2</sup> Thus by the middle of the fifth century B. C., the supreme Godhead of Vaasudeva Krishna had been established by his identification with Vishnu. This is further confirmed by Megasthenes ( 4th century B. C. ), who mentions that Heracles was held in special veneration by the Shoursenoi tribe. Dr. Bhandarkar identified this tribe with the Satvata and Heracles with Hari-Vaasudeva. Thus the

1. De, IHQ, xviii, pp. 297-301.

2. Dr. R. N. Dandekar, VHT, p. 85.

identification of Arjuna and the divinity of Krishna had come to be well-established in the days of Sauti, who refers to it on a number of occasions, which have been referred in this para.

It was not unusual for a scion of the Vrishni race to have gone to Ghora Angiras to receive instruction in the esoteric doctrines of the Ups. That some Varshnayas had shown interest in the Vedic religion is borne out by their mention in the Tait. Sam. ( III. ii. 9-3 ), the Shat. Br. ( III. i. 1.4 ), the Jaim. Br. ( I. vi. 1 ) and Brih. Up. ( III. x, 9, 5 ), . Of these Gobala Varshnya is mentioned as a teacher in the Tait. Br. and that Sasha Varshreya had communion with the sun for religious instruction. Krishna must have learnt from Ghora Angiras all the upanishadic lore and not merely his special instruction in the Chhand. Up.

We have to see how this teaching of Krishna came into possession of Sauti, who had composed the Gita. We can only make an intelligent guess on this point. The ancestry of Krishna is traced to Yadu, son of Yayati by Devayani, who was the daughter of the Asur priest Shukra, grandson of Bhrigu. The Bhargava clan must have prized this connection and held Krishna in high regard. It must have, therefore, treasured his teaching and handed it down the line. Shaunaka, whom Sauti calls Bhargava ( Mbh. I.16 ) must have come into possession of it and later got it incorporated into the Gita through Sauti.

Krishna is also represented in the epic as having told Arjuna to carry on the war manfully with the Kauravas and wrest their kingdom from them. Sauti, who is the author of the Gita, has included his advice to Arjuna in the core of the Gita. It has been possible to separate this core by identifying and counting the verses in which Krishna does not declare himself to be God or Sauti does not ascribe divinity to him. We shall have to omit the first 47 verses in the first adhyaya, as it is very unlikely that Krishna could have related the core to Arjuna on the battle-field after the start of the war. Further it is also very unlikely that Krishna would have known the different Sankhya theories or the gunas as the constituents of prakriti, and we

shall have to exclude adhyayas xiii and xiv. Further we shall have to leave out 25 verses in adhyayas iii. 22-24, 130-32, iv. 1-15, v-29, vi. 30-31, 47 and 22 verses from adhyayas xvi. 18-20, xv. iii. 55-8, 64-78 ie. in all 47 verses in which Krishna declares himself God. The core would consist of 331 verses and the Gita composed by Sauti would contain 369 verses.

Although Krishna states that works consisting of sacrifice, charity and austerities purify the mind, he is critical of devotion to ritual works (*karmashtha*). The Core glorifies *jnanayajna* as the best among all sacrifices, as all actions cease after its attainment. All human activity is undertaken in order to achieve happiness in this life. While recognising this principle, our ancient thinkers were first to realise that happiness is not of the same kind, but differs in intensity and duration. ( See Shat. Br., Tait. Up. II-8 and Brit. up. IV. 3.33 )

Man can rise to a higher level of happiness and freedom according as he attains to a higher level of consciousness. This will become evident when we consider the Vedanta view regarding the true nature of Self. According to Tait. Up. ( II. i.5 ) the body and the senses, consisting of the nature of food, constitute the outer self. Other than this but within it is the mind, which is the substratum of all mental processes. Different from this but within it is the intellect, the rational self. Different from this but within it is the true self, consisting of pure bliss ( iii. 46 ). Sensual pleasures, when indulged in moderately are good, but higher than them are the mental pleasures. Higher than the mental pleasures are the intellectual pleasures, but higher than the latter is the supreme bliss, which Krishna describes as the complete cessation of pain ( iv. 19 ), the perfect peace ( v. 12 ) the supreme bliss in which one abides in God ( vi. 15 ).

If man lives only for the satisfaction of his passing whims without any definite aim in life, he lives a life of anactivity or drift. If only he has a definite purpose in life, he is able to subordinate his desires to the achievement of that purpose.

Vedanta recognizes four aims to which human effort is directed consciously, sensual pleasures ( *kaama* ), acquisition of wealth ( *artha* ), discharge of duty ( *dharma* ) and liberation ( *moksha* ). The Core calls the seekers of sensual pleasures *indriyarama* ( iii.16 ). The sense organs play an important part in the acquisition of the knowledge of the world. The objects of sense are so constituted that they form pairs of opposites, which give rise to pleasant and unpleasant sensations. Thus a musical note or a fragrant smell gives rise to a pleasant sensation, while a harsh sound or a foul smell produces an unpleasant sensation. This is the nature's way of indicating to a person what he should accept and what he should avoid. In the early stages of human life, this knowledge was essential to him for survival.

But with the growth of civilization man has added to the simple pleasures of life sensual pleasures which arise from excessive indulgence in tasty food, drinks and sex. These sensuous pleasures may give him momentary happiness, but they affect his judgement and come in the way of his spiritual progress. As the Core says ( iii. 34 ) every sense-organ has a natural attachment or aversion to the pairs of opposites such as heat and cold, pleasure and pain etc. which are known by the technical term *dvandva*. If one is not careful, these attachments and aversions will determine one's course of action. This is especially true when a person is trying to do his duty or striving for perfection. How the impetuous senses carry away a person's mind from the path of yoga is described in verses ii. 62-63. When a person broods in his mind on the objects of sense, he forms a strong attachment for them. This attachment gives rise to a consuming passion ( *kaama* ) and thwarted passion gives rise to anger ( *krodha* ) and fear ( *bhaya* ) according as he feels confident or helpless in overcoming the obstruction.<sup>1</sup> When a person becomes a slave to his passion, he suffers from a sense of bewilderment and loss of memory as to the teachings of scriptures. As a result he loses all sense of discrimination, and

being unable to decide what he ought to do and what he ought to avoid, he goes to ruin.

Next to sensual pleasures is the love of riches. Money is a medium of value with which one can buy food and creature comforts and also help one's less fortunate brethren in times of their need. Since, however, it has become a store of value with the development of currency and banking and has provided some security against a rainy day it has mostly come to be valued for itself. Many now derive pleasure from the mere fact of its possession than its proper use. In the olden times the miser suffered himself and made others dependent upon him suffer privation. But in the modern world money has become a source of corruption in the hands of the unscrupulous.

Human desires are also regulated by the concept of his duty i.e. his dharma in relation to the social group of which he is a member; even in ancient times he had to enter into different types of social relationships for his survival and continuation of his race. Thus in the old days his obligations were mostly confined to the care of his family or the welfare of his tribe or village community. In the epic and puranic times, his duties were defined by his class or caste and later by the stage of his life. However the ultimate of human life is not merely the diligent performance of one's duty but God-realisation.

Now the question arises : why should a person who starts an activity in pursuit of happiness end up with the accumulation of merit and demerit and thereby suffer bondage and rebirth ? Arjuna pointedly asked Krishna what forced a person to do wicked things even against his will ? Krishna replied that man possesses within himself a lurking enemy, an all-consuming passion, which drives him on the evil path ( iii. 37 ). This desire is concealed in his senses, mind and intellect and when it becomes strong, it overpowers them and impairs his discriminating faculty. When this desire is frustrated in any way, it turns into anger and so it comprises anger also. However, as Manu says, this desire is not satiated by

enjoyment, but it begins to increase like fire fed with oblation.<sup>1</sup>

The Core goes on to explain what is action and inaction and says that even the wise find it perplexing ( iv.16 ). Krishna makes the cryptic remark that one alone is wise who sees inaction in action and action in inaction. ( iv. 18 ). This verse is variously explained by the commentators; however, none of the interpretation given by them seem to explain satisfactorily the assertion of Krishna that the way of action is mysterious ( IV. 7 ). This remark seems to indicate that action can become inaction under some special circumstances. When action is undertaken with a desire for reward, it results in the accumulation of merit and demerit and leads to future births. But if a person acts without desire for the fruit of action, he does nothing even when he is continually engaged in work ( iv.20-21 ). This means that work undertaken without attachment to its fruit is tantamount to inaction ( akarma ). Krishna, therefore, advised Arjuna to perform yoga and called it karmasu kaushalam, skill in action. What this skill consists in is explained in the very next verse. It is stated therein that by giving up the fruit of action, a self-controlled person becomes freed from the bondage of rebirth and attains the sorrowless state. Shri Shankara explains that it is the skill by which actions which by their very nature lead to bondage give up their nature.<sup>2</sup>

### Gita as a Synthesis

As stated before the question whether the Gita was composed by one or more authors has been a matter of dispute among scholars. It is obvious that these widely different views about the original Gita are based on a subjective appreciation of internal evidence. A statistical study of the anushtubh style of

<sup>1</sup>. Manusmriti. 2.94.2

<sup>2</sup>. tad dhi kaushalam yad

bandhanasvabhavany api karmani  
samatvabuddhya svabhavan  
nivartamte. shb. on ii.50.

the adhyayas of the Gita undertaken by the author showed that the variation of this style as between the eighteen adhyayas are not significant to justify the assumption of its multiple authorship.<sup>1</sup> This also supports the view held by a majority of Indian scholars and some Western scholars such as Hill and Edgerton, who held that Gita had come down to us in its original form. As it discloses the B-style, its author was Sauti, who was a bard in the court of king Prasenjit Kosala, a descendant of Puru. He, and his father Suta who lived in 450 B.C. have made extensive additions to both the epics.

We have, therefore, to see how this teaching of Lord Krishna came into the possession of Sauti. The ancestry of Krishna is traced to Yadu, son of Yayati by Devayani, who was the daughter of the asura priest Shukra. The Bhargava clan must have prized this connection and held Krishna in high regard. It must have therefore, preserved his teaching and handed it down the line. Shaunaka, when Sauti calls Bhargava (Mbh.1.16) must have come into possession of it and later got it incorporated into the Mbh. through Sauti. The Mbh. (I.4) also tells us that Sauti had gone to recite the Mbh. at the twelve year sacrificial session held by Shaunka in the Nainish forest.

To the students of the Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita, it is obvious that the latter contains the quintessence of the Vedanta philosophy, the colophon at the end of every adhyaya also points out that the Gita deals with brahmavidya i.e. the knowledge of the supreme Brahman. While Lord Krishna fully endorses the Vedanta doctrine that dedicated pursuit of knowledge and disinterested performance of work lead to God realisation, he does not reject the Vedic deities and rites. He tells us that he is the three Vedas (IX.17), the knower as well as the knowable of the Vedas (XV.15). He declares that he is the supreme God and that the Vedic deities are his aspects.

1. MGG. Appendix, I-A. pp. 171-175.

(vibhutis, ix). He says that he is Vishnu among the Adityas, the sun among the luminaries, Indra among the gods, Shankara among the Rudras, Agni among the Vasus and Varuna among the equatic deities, who comprise nearly all the Vedic deities.

Lord Krishna is, however, critical of the Vedic rites, as with the worship of a Vedic deity a person attains only to the deity. But that worship also reaches him as he is the Lord and enjoyer of sacrifice (ix.24). He further goes on to state that both sacrificial rites and austerities are purifying and so should be performed and not discarded (xviii.5). For if work is undertaken by recourse to Yoga i.e. in a disinterested spirit for the sake of the Lord, it eventually leads to freedom from action and liberation. Thus the Gita brings about a synthesis between the Vedic deities and supreme Brahman and declares that the Vedic rites as laid down in the Brahmanas (Karmakanda), if performed without a selfish motive, would lead to the same result as Self-knowledge preceded by renunciation as expounded in the Upanishads (BGS. p. 64).

The second stream of thought which has influenced the Gita is the Sankhya with its allied system Yoga. The Gita refers to the Sankhya seven times and it seems beyond doubt that these relate to the Sankhya System. In its verse xviii.13, the Gita describes the five causes of action as Sankhya kritante proktani. Shri Shankara, takes Sankhya to mean here Vedanta, in which the subjects to be known are fully stated, and Kritanta as that knowledge, which puts an end to all future action. While agreeing with the interpretation of shri Shankara, Shridhara says that the term Sankhya may also mean the Sankhya system and Kritanta as the final conclusion reached by the Sankhyas. However, in the Mokshadharma, Suta used the term Sankhya to denote the Sankhya system as also the Sankhya teachers. (SN.XII.306). In HM (XII.337) also the Sankhya system is mentioned separately from the Vedas and Aranyakas.<sup>1</sup> Moreover

1. Although this has been shown as inserted by Harivamshakara in the Mbh. the verse XII.337 could go with XII.338-353, which have been added by Suta.

the Gita describes sage Kapila, the mythical founder of the Sankhya system as the foremost among the siddhas and as a special manifestation of God. ( x-26 ). Further the last three adhyayas describe the three gunas and their effect on human conduct and character and verse xviii.19 clearly mentions that the classification of knowledge, action and agent is taken from the doctrine of the gunas, which shri Shankara himself calls the teaching of Kapila. The Sankhya doctrine of the body and the self is faithfully recorded in the Gita in terms of vyakta and avyakta ( viii.18.21 ), kshetra and kshetrajna ( xiii.1-6 ), prakriti and purusha ( xv.19-21 ) and kshare and akshara ( xv.16 ).

The different accounts of Sankhya spread over different adhyayas as also the different terminologies employed indicate that different schools of Sankhya were in vogue in those times. It cannot be gain said that among the contemporary thinkers the Sankhyas had attempted a logical explanation of the wordly insentient prakriti as the object of experience ( bhogya ) and the sentient purusha as its experiences ( bhoktri ). An outstanding feature of Vedanta has been its readiness to absorb all advances of thought made by other systems without compromising in any way its theistic creed. A true Vedantist will never accept the Sankhya prakriti as the independent cause of the material world. The Gita declares that this eightfold prakriti is the apara prakriti, the lower nature of God. The higher nature of God consists of the individual Self ( purusha ), contemplation of whom leads to emancipation.

Thus Lord Krishna enlarges the concept of prakriti to include the ashtadha prakriti as well as the purusha. He thus attempts a synthesis of Sankhya and Vedanta by stating that this twofold prakriti is not different or independent of Him but constitutes his very nature. He describes this relationship with it by such terms as me ( vii.4 ), sva ( ix.18 ) and mamika ( ix.7 ), thus rejecting the Sankhya doctrine of independent prakriti. Since all beings thus emerge from this two-fold nature

of his, he is the origin and dissolution of the world. ( vii.6 ). He is the purushottama, the supreme being, who transcends the perishable prakriti and the immutable Self ( purusha ) ( xv.18 ).

The Sankhyas explain how activity involves a person in bondage and results in a cycle of rebirths by their doctrine of gunas. This Sankhya doctrine is incorporated in adhyaya XIV of the Gita. The Self becomes endowed with a body and mind as a result of his past actions. The latter are also products of prakriti and possess three gunas, sattva, rajas and tamas. The gunas are so called because they are subordinate to ( gauna ) and dependent upon the Self. The Sankhyas regard them as the primary constituents of nature, but the Gita seems to regard them as qualities or modes inherent in nature.<sup>1</sup> Sattva is the quality of illumination ( prakasha ), rajas the quality of motion ( pravritti ) and tamas is the quality of inertia ( aprakasha, apravritti ). They also denote the mental qualities of goodness, passion and dullness.

When one quality prevails over the other two in a person, it becomes known from the characteristic marks of his disposition. Thus when sattva predominates, the mind becomes illuminated and the light of knowledge manifests itself through his senses. Greed, restless activity and a constant search for excitement and pleasure are indicative of the dominance of rajas. Dullness, inaction, inattention and delusion are the characteristic marks of a tamasa disposition. Through goodness a person may attain the celestial world, but only to return to this mortal world after his merit is exhausted. When he is passionately attached to the material pleasures of this world, he performs bad and good deeds and is reborn in the human world. But if he remains subject to inertia and ignorance throughout his life, he is born in the dull species such as cattle, trees etc. Thus so long as the embodied Self identifies himself with the body, he is bound by the qualities of prakriti and goes through the perpetual round of births and deaths. Even if he reaches

<sup>1</sup> Prakritijair gunah, core iii.5

perfection in the moral plane, the highest world he can attain to is heaven, which is also impermanent being subject to destruction at the time of the great Dissolution. The Sankhyas, therefore, hold that one must rise in the spiritual plane by the steady application to Sankhyayoga, which is the extinction of desire and renunciation of action. Thus here Sankhya is equated with the jnanayoga of Vedanta.<sup>1</sup> The Gita has also adopted the technique of meditation from the Yoga system, which it recommends as the internal aid to budhiyoga ( Gita, p. 67-68 ).

Thus the process of assimilation of the Sankhya and Yoga tenets in the Vedanta, which had already started in the Mokshadharma, reached its culmination in the Gita. Shri Shankara makes this clear in explaining the term gunasankhyana in verse ( xviii.19 ) He says that the doctrine of the gunas, which is the philosophy of Kapila, is valid in so far as it concerns the experiences of the gunas, even though it is contrary to the Vedanta doctrine of non-dual Brahman. ( SBB.xviii.19 ). He explains that bliss cannot be attained by Sankhya independently of the Vedic knowledge or by the path of Yoga and that ' by the words Sankhya and Yoga, knowledge and meditation are meant here because of their resemblance.' He further says that ' we allow full scope for those two systems to the extent that they do not contradict the Vedas.'

Dr. Bhandarkar states<sup>2</sup> that when the Gita was composed the identification of Vaasudeva with Narayana had not taken place or that Vaasudeva had not come to be regarded as an incarnation of Vishnu. However, Narayana had come to be equated with Vishnu in the time of Suta and Sauti only. This would explain why Narayana was mentioned separately in the Gita ( BGS. p. 70 ). It is stated in the Naraniya section of the Mbh. itself ( HM. XII, 336.49 ) that the Pancharatra religion was explained to Arjuna by Krishna himself in Harigita i.e. Bhagavadgita.

1. jnanapikshastu samnyasah sankhya iti mayabhipretah, Shri Shankara.

2. Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar, Vsh MRS, p. 13.

Of the two main doctrines of the Pancharatra system, the Gita does not mention the doctrine of the four vyuhas, and so Dr. Bhandarkar thought that the Gita was composed before the doctrine of the Bhagavata, meaning Pancharatra, were reduced to a system. ( Vsh. MRS. p. 17 ). But Sauti refers to the four vyuhas in Mbh.VI.61, 64-67. Later he alludes to the four vyuhas explicitly in Mbh. XIII.145 and describes Vaasudeva as the pervader of the universe and Sankarashana as jiva. It seems, therefore, that the Pancharatra doctrine with its four vyuhas was known to Sauti who did not accept it as it was contrary to Vedanta. Shri Shankara in his Bhashya on Brahmasutra ( II-2-42 ) argues that Sankarashana could not have originated from Vaasudeva, because then jiva ( Self ) would become a product and non permanent and so would never attain liberation. He also comments on the very next Sutra ( II-2.43 ); that Pradyumna as mind cannot be a product of Sankarashana as jiva, as an instrument is not known to originate from an agent. However, the recognition of Vaasudeva as Krishna alone would not be contrary to the Pancharatra, as that creed speaks of one, two, three or four vyuhas.<sup>1</sup>

The Gita, however, has incorporated the second tenet of the Pancharatra system, namely ekantabhakti or exclusive devotion to Narayana, the supreme God. This is clear from such expressions as machchitta, matpara, ekabhakti, ananyabhakti etc., which signify that the devotee should give sole devotion to Him and also accept Him as the goal of life. Madhusudana explains the Gita verses xii. 9-11 as follows : " A devotee should, if possible, practise meditation of God or if not, he should follow the Bhagavata dharma or even if that is not possible, he should renounce the fruit of works. The word Bhaagavata does not occur anywhere in the Critical Edition of Mbh. but is found to be used in the Harivamsha in the sense of a devotee of Bhagavat. It is nowhere used as a synonym for Pancharatra, and in fact, Bana in his Harshacharita ( 8th Uchchvasa ), mentions Bhagavatas separately from the

1. HM. XII . 336, 53.

followers of Pancharatra.<sup>1</sup> The Bhagavata cult seems to have arisen later drawing the inspiration from the Gita with its emphasis on Krishna as the supreme God. This cult further simplified the forms of worship, rating devotion (bhakti) and love (bhava) as higher than elaborate ritual. The Bhagavata religion spread rapidly not only in the place of its birth, but also in Northern India. This is evident from the Besanagar inscription of the second century B.C. on a flagstaff erected by Helidorus, an ambassador of the Greek king Antialkidas in the court of king Bhagabhadra. The Naneghat inscription also shows that Bhagavatism had also spread to the south in the first century B.C.

### **God is both imminent and transcendent**

As stated in BGS (p. 93), God has assumed the universal form and is immanent in the universe. This had been repeatedly stated in the Gita. The Gita further states in ix.4 and 5 that God pervades the universe as space pervades the pots etc. and that He is the originator and sustainer of all beings, affirming at the same time that he does not exist in them. Various explanations have been offered by the commentators on this contradiction in terms. But all these explanations, apart from being different, do not at all explain why the Lord should say that he exists in them and also repeats it again in the very next verse. Since he is the material cause of all beings, he exists in them in one sense, but as he transcends them all individually and in their totality, He cannot be said to exist in them wholly. As Dr. Radhakrishnan points out, the cosmos is only a partial manifestation of the Absolute.<sup>2</sup> No finite world can fully express the infinite, although it is a manifestation of God. There is no limit to His Divine manifestation (x.40) and God sustains the whole creation, pervading it with only a part of himself.

1. Kane, HD. Vol. V, Part II, p. 955, fn. 1548.

2. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgita*, p. 930.

## **EPIC THEOGONY**

### **Vedic Period**

In the Vedic period there was an ideological conflict between the protagonists of ritualism and asceticism. We shall now show that this conflict had deeper roots in two different cultures, which may be called the Asura culture and the Vedic culture. As we saw before, in the early Vedic period Indra was the war hero who had been raised to the status of a god by the doctrine of euhemerism. His killing of Vritra, his arch-rival among the asuras was further transformed into the myth of the hero and the dragon which is usually associated with the solar god, by identifying Vritra with the dragon (ahi). In the Brahmana period, when the people had adopted different occupations, the need was felt of a preserver of sacrifice. Macdonel has brought forth the traits of Vishnu as a preserver in the Rigveda. He states that Vishnu is beneficent (RV.I.36), is innocuous and bountiful (RV.VII.12) and a generous protector (RV.VIII.155). The Brahmanas, therefore, looked to him for the preservation of sacrifice and identified him with sacrifices as a whole (Ait Br. 1.1). Thus in the time of the early Vedic period, Indra was the war hero of the Vedic Aryans, who had led them from one victory to another over the dasyus and asuras after their entry into Aryan Bharata. We find frequent

references to the struggle between the asuras and the devas for supremacy not only in the RV and the Brahmanas but also in the Shrauta literature and the Mbh.; the most important exploits of Indra invariably link the killing of the asura kings and the destruction of their towns.

The conflict between the asuras and the devas did not stop at the ideological level but assumed sinister forms. We come across frequent accounts of how the austerities undertaken by the asuras were interrupted by Indra out of fear that they would become strong thereby and wrest from him his overlordship of heaven. There are also other accounts in which we are told how the asuras took every opportunity to destroy the sacrifices undertaken by the followers of Indra in order to weaken the power of gods by depriving them of their customary offerings. The Tandya Mahabrahmana (xiv.4) tells us that the Vaikhanasa munis, who were the favourites of Indra (RV.VIII.7), were killed by one Rahasya Devamahimluc in a place which came to be known as munimarana. On the other hand, the hermit clan known as yatis, who were connected with the Bhrigus, were thrown by Indra to the wolf-hounds (shalavrikas), (Tai. Sam, VI.28). Both the Ait. Brahmana (VII.2) and the Mbh. (XII.15) record this action of Indra as sinful.

It is stated that Indra conquered hundred of towns asura king Shambara (RV.IV.30) and gave their wealth to Divodas and Bharadvaja (RV.VI.30). He conquered seven cities of the asura king Sharat and made a gift of these to Purukutsa (RV.VI.20). He performed the terrible feat of killing his arch-enemy Vritra, destroyed his ninety-nine cities and released the waters which were impounded by Vritra (RV.1.32). The latter is probably a reference to the destruction of embankments, which stored river water for supply of drinking water to the town people. We are told (RV.III.30) that assisted by Agni, Indra destroyed ninety-nine towns in one attempt which would indicate that he resorted to incendiaryism to destroy enemy towns. Indra's epithets

such as purabhid and purandara seem to suggest that he made a forced entry into the fortified settlements of asuras and destroyed them.<sup>1</sup> This literary evidence of the destruction of asura towns by the Vedic Aryans is supported by the archaeological remains of the Indus civilization. Thus both the literary and archaeological evidence seems to lend support to Sir Mortimer Wheeler's view that the Vedic aryans led by Indra were responsible for the ruin and destruction of the Indus civilization.<sup>2</sup>

The arguments advanced by Sir John Marshall<sup>3</sup> are unquestionable and we can do no better than summarize them here. There were at Mohenjodaro and Harappa densely populated towns with solid commodious houses of brick with adequate sanitation, bathrooms, wells and other amenities. On the other hand, the Vedic people formed a prominently pastoral society and lived in houses largely constructed of bomboos in villages. The draft animal bull was prized by the Indus people above all animals, while the milk-yielding cow was held in special veneration by the Vedic people. The horse, which plays such an important part in the Vedic society, was unknown to the people at Mohenjodaro and Harappa, as it was not found among the figurins of animals recovered at those places. The seafood was a common article of diet of the Indus people, while the Vedic Aryans were mainly meat-eaters, as there is no mention of fishing in the Vedas. The Vedic Aryans used in the times of Rigveda gold, copper and bronze but silver was more common than gold among the Indus people, while both of them employed copper and bronze for making vessels and utensils. The Indus people sometimes made use of stone also for this purpose, obviously a relic of the neolithic age. For offensive weapons both used the bow and the arrow, dagger and the axe, but defensive armour such as the helmet and the coat of mail

1. Sukumari Bhattacharji, *The Indian Theogony*, p. 252.

2. Sir Mortimer Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization*, pp. 131-132.

3. Sir John Marshall, *Mohenjodaro and Indus Civilization*, pp. 110-112.

used by the Vedic people were quite unknown to the Indus people, which must have worked heavily to their disadvantage in armed conflicts between the two. While the Vedic religion was aniconic, icon worship was common among the Indus people, as is apparent from the remains at Mohenjodaro and Harappa. While in the Vedic pantheon the female element was in a subordinate position, the cults of mother goddess and Lord Shiva were prominent among the Indus people. While phallus worship was abhorrent to the Vedic people, it was widely practised by the Indus people.

As pointed out by Sir John Marshall, these two civilizations were so unlike each other that it would be difficult to stipulate a common Indo-Aryan source for them. In an interesting monograph, Dr. Malati Shendge<sup>1</sup> has shown how the so called demons ( asuras ) had reached a height of urban civilization unusual in those times. The asuras also appear to have been more advanced culturally in comparison with the Vedic Aryans. As compared with the Vedic god Indra with his drinking habits and amorous adventures, their asura god Varuna stands out prominently as the defender of truth and cosmic order. From the roughly carved seal found by Mackay from the remains at Mohenjodaro, it is apparent that they also worshiped the prototype of god Shiva seated in a yogic posture. We read in the HM.XIII.18 that the asura kings were his special proteges and obtained special boons from him by propitiating him with rigorous austerities. There were some well known asura kings, who held advanced views on politics and moral conduct. In HM. III. 28, Prahlada, an illustrious asura king, is said to have explained to his grandson Bali the respective merits of soft and hard decisions. He told Bali that a king had to take soft or hard decisions as the occasion required. He taught Indra, who had approached him in the guise of a brahmin, the rules of good

1. Dr. Malati Shendge : *The civilised Demons : Harappans in Rigveda*, Delhi, 1977.

conduct. He gifted Indra his virtue ( shila ), as a result of which along with virtue righteousness, truth, good conduct and prosperity left him one by one and entered Indra.<sup>1</sup>

The following accounts of some illustrious asura kings mentioned by Sauti shows that they had accepted their defeat by Indra with philosophic calm. After Indra had wrested the overlordship from Prahlada, he went to see the latter and found him living in a desolate place, apparently calm and collected. When asked about the secret of his equanimity, Prahlada explained to him the doctrine of svabhava. He said whatever happens in this world is the result of the inherent nature ( svabhava ) of things and that one should, therefore, watch the appearance and disappearance of all created things without attachment, without pride, free from all bonds and with indifference to everything ( Mbh. XII.215 ). Mbh. records a similar dialogue between Bali and Indra, where Bali explained his defeat and loss of fortune to the inexorable march of time. He expounded the doctrine of Kaala, which brought everything to fruition and established everything ( XII. 216 ). When Vritra was asked the same question by Ushanas, the former replied that there was no cause for elation or grief, as one got his due as a result of his past actions ( Mbh. XII. 270 ). In religious books such as the Yoga-Vaasishtha the story of Bali is given to illustrate disinterestedness ( anasakti )<sup>2</sup> Even if these dialogues are apocryphal, they seem to enshrine the tradition that the doctrines of svabhava, kaala and karma, as also the qualities of equanimity and disinterested actions, on which the Bhagvadgita lays such great emphasis, seem to have had their origin in the asura culture.

Now the question arises, who were these asuras who, from

1. Mbh. XII. 124 ( Sauti ).

2. Vettam Muni : *Puranic Encyclopedia*, Delhi 1975, p. 104.

all accounts, were a cultured and civilised people ? Sayana's commentary does not throw any light on the identity of those whom Indra defeated. He called some of them as asura, others as enemy kings. The Vedic scholars generally assume that the asuras were non-Aryan tribes on the Indian soil, whose chiefs offered resistance to the invading Aryan hordes. There are, however, indications in the RV. itself that the Vedic aryans had to fight with aryan tribes also. In RV. VI. 60.6.<sup>1</sup> Indra and Agni are praised for their conquest of the dasas as well as aryan tribes. The Brahmanas describe the asuras as prajapatiyah, i.e. as sons of Prajapati. It is stated in the Shat. Br. ( IX.5 ) that both the devas and asuras had sprung from Prajapati and entered upon their father's inheritance. The Brih. Up. ( 1.3.1 ) tells us that Prajapati had a two-fold progeny, the devas and asuras, of whom the devas were the younger and the asuras were the elder. We cannot explain such statements unless both the devas and asuras belonged to the Aryan race and the Asuras entered India before the Vedic Aryans. The asura Varuna religion is akin to the Ahura-Mazda religion of the Iranian Aryans so that both of them could be said to have developed out of a common religious ideology of their Aryan ancestors. Vatsa Kanya mentioned that he received wealth from Tirinder, son of Parshu, which according to Griffith are Iranian names ( Tirindores and Persa ).<sup>2</sup> From this it is evident that there were close relations between Indians and Iranians in those days.<sup>3</sup>

The Iranian Aryans must have come to know with horror and helplessness the destruction of a sister civilization by the Vedic Aryans led by Indra. Otherwise one cannot explain why the same conquests which led to the deification of the Vedic war hero Indra in India led to his being represented as the arch-devil

1. For other references see RV. VI. 22.10, X. 69.6, X. 83.1, X. 102.3  
quoted by Kane : H. D. Vol. II, Part I, p. 27.

2. RV. VII. 6.46

3. Rahurkar, *The seers of the Rigveda*, p. 161.

in ancient Iran. Thus in the Avesta the word Ahura denotes the mighty God and the word Daeva means a demon. A victorious people usually ascribe their victory to their godlike qualities and denounce their enemies as demons. Thus the Asuras came to be regarded as demonical and the word Sura was artificially coined to denote a god by deleting the negative prefix a in Asura.<sup>1</sup> This pejorative sense in which the word Asura came to be known later is also to be found in the Gita. ( adhy. xvi ).

The Vedic religion has always been eclectic, absorbing within itself all the deities which existed in different periods. Fire, as also the sun and the moon were the deities of both the Asuras and the Devas. As we saw before, with the growing popularity of the Indra cult, some of the devotees of Varuna such as Gritsamada and Vasishtha changed sides and became the enthusiastic supporters of Indra. Later Vasishtha seems to have made a serious attempt to bring about a compromise between the Indra religion and Varuna religion by some such arguments as ' Indra conquers and Varuna rules. ' ( RV.VII.83 ). However, as a result of these efforts Varuna got only a subordinate position in the Vedic pantheon with hardly a dozen hymns to celebrate his glory. It is true that we come across some passages in RV. which glorify Varuna as the supreme God, but they seem to testify to his former glory. In fact we are told in RV ( IV.42 ) that Varuna tried to stake his claim to religious hegemony, but Indra flatly refused to give up his position as the mighty God. Eventually moral authority had to yield before superior might and the sages had to concede Indra's claim to supremacy unreservedly. Although Varuna was accorded a special position by his association with Indra as dual deity Indravarunau, he never regained his former glory. From his position as the controller of the world whose decrees all followed, he was reduced to the position of the god of ocean and lord of the aquatic creatures

1. Dr. Dandekar, VMT, p. 184. fn. 87.

( BG.x.29 ). The other god of the asuras Rudra Shiva seems to have fared better. He too was given an insignificant status in RV. with only three hymns and was originally denied a share in the sacrificial offerings. His claim was allowed only after he threatened the gods ( Shat. Br. 1.7 ). In the Rigveda there is a Vedic god Rudra, who is described as a destroyer of wild animals in the hunting stage. Shiva later came to be indentified with this Vedic god Rudra. He later became the Supreme God ( mahadeva ) in the Mbh. period and a member of the Hindu trinity ( trimurti ) in the Puranic period.

The people of Kosala were Vedic Aryans who had colonised this region in the immediate post-Vedic period to which Valmiki's original Ramayana belonged. As Brokington observes ( p.194 ), "The religious pattern of the core of the text is decidedly more archaic than has been generally recognised elsewhere." During the period of Valmiki, and even upto the time of Sauti, the gods were recognised to be 33 koti, where the term koti meant kinds and not crores as stated in the Puranas. Kaikeyi could not invoke a larger number of gods to bear witness to the promise given by King Dasharatha to make her son his successor. The gods so recognised consisted of eight Vasus, eleven Rudras, twelve Adityas and Indra and Prajapati ( SR.1.39 ). Agni, Shiva and Vishnu were also Vedic gods, but they were not yet prominent enough to deserve separate mention. They were included among the Vasus, Rudras and Adityas respectively. The people of Kosala worshipped deities in the Vedic pantheon such as Indra, the Ashvins, Parjanya and Varuna. Although Varuna, the supreme God of the Asuras was given a place in the Vedic pantheon, he ranked lower than Indra. In the time of Valmiki Indra was still the most prominent God with Vishnu subordinate to him, as Raama is compared to Indra and Lakshmana to Vishnu. Varuna was still more prominent than Shiva, as it was he and not Shiva who gave the famous bow to Janaka ( VR.2-28; 110.38 ). Indra who was the most prominent God in the Vedic period continued to be so in Valmiki's time also.

We shall now briefly review the factors which led to the growth of the Shaiva religion during the period of the Mbh. In the Vedic circles the influence of the Vedic god Indra seemed to be waning during the time of the Upanishads. This war god had ceased to have any economic relevance, when in course of time, the Vedic Aryans had settled down to pastoral life with little agriculture. Indra's human foibles and his amorous habits must also have been jarring on the sensitivity of a people, who were trying to evolve a moral code for people engaged in different occupations. Of the two other gods who had become important in the time of Valmiki, the position of Brahmaa seems to have declined, as there are only a few references to him in Vaishampayana text. Sauti has tried to justify his unpopularity on the ground that only gods who were killers such as Indra, Shiva and Vishnu were adored by the people.<sup>1</sup> Most probably he was not accepted by the Aryan people as he was a Dravidian God. It was only in Sauti's time that he was identified with the Vedic god Prajapati<sup>2</sup> and included among the Vedic gods.

In the time of Vaishampayana, however, Lord Shiva had come to be regarded as the foremost God and worshipped in the human form as well as the form of a linga ( phallus ).<sup>3</sup> That the word linga was employed in the sense of phallus is clear from the epithets of Shiva in the sahasranamastotra such as having an erect phallus, having a big male organ and as containing the seed of progeny.<sup>4</sup> There is also a clear mention of phallus worship in Anushasanaparva ( VM. 14.101 ). When Lord Shiva appeared before Upamanyu in the disguise of Indra and asked him to choose a boon, he declined it on the ground that he would accept a boon only from Shiva. When he was asked for a reason, he said that he was the only god, whose male organ

1. Mbh. XII. 15-16-19, Sauti

2. Mbh. XII. 18.1-4

3. VM. 173.94

4. urdhvalinga ( 45 ), mahamedhra ( 5 ) and prajabija ( 139 ).

was worshipped by all. The Vedic religion did not know of even image worship until the time of Panini. The seers of Rigveda deprecated the practice of phallus worship and derisively called the worshippers of Shiva shishnadevas or phallus-worshippers. We have, therefore, to trace the origin of this God not to the Vedic Rudra, but to a proto-Indian God, who existed prior to him.

A roughly carved seal was found by Mackay in the archeological excavations carried out at Mohenjodaro (Plate XII. 17). This seal portrays a three-faced male god, seated on a low Indian throne, in a typical yogic pose with legs bent beneath him, heel to heel and toes turned downwards. His lower limbs were bare with the phallus seemingly exposed. In addition to being the prince of yogis, he was also the lord of beasts, pashupati. Moreover, both at Mohenjodaro and Harappa, some aniconic objects were found, which were mainly fashioned out of stone, but occasionally metals were also used. Sir John Marshall observes that two of these (Pl. XIV. 2 & 4) are unquestionably phalli, more or less realistically modelled and prove conclusively that phallic worship in India had a pre-Aryan origin.<sup>1</sup> As Dr. Dandekar has aptly said, the Indus valley religion, namely the pre-epic Shiva religion, promoted the worship of the anthropomorphic ithyphallic god as well as of the separate phallic symbol.<sup>2</sup>

His forms of worship were no less bizarre and outlandish. He had special fondness for flesh and blood, which he liked to receive as an offering (*bali*) and not in the form of an oblation through fire (*havis*). His devotees worshipped him among other things, by pouring over his icon blood of animals, more particularly the buffalo and as a consequence of this, the god actually looked red. Dr. Dandekar states that both the words Rudra and Shiva mean red, the former being derived from a hypothetical lost root *rud*, meaning to be red and the latter from

1. M. I. C. I. pp. 52-54

2. Dandekar, Vaishnavism and Shaivism in RGBI. p. 68

a proto-Dravidian word meaning the red one.<sup>1</sup> Though Shiva liked his devotees to offer flesh and blood as a *bali*, he also liked them to chant hymns especially the *Shatarudriya* and practice austerities. In the Shaiva religion greater emphasis is placed on *tapas* or austerity than on any other form of worship. If the Vedic seers viewed these unusual forms of worship of Shiva with disparagement, his uncouth appearance and outlandish associations were not such as to inspire their confidence. The gods of the Vedic pantheon were good-looking, splendidly attired, bedecked with costly jewels and pleasure-loving. As against this Shiva is described in the epic as draped in dripping animal hide, crazy, short of stature, ithyphallic and of ascetic habits.<sup>2</sup> Barth, therefore, rightly observes that, "We can conceive nothing more life-like than the figure, which stands from this piece of rude realism, but nothing at the same time, less Brahmanic."

That Shiva was a god of non-Vedic origin is clear from the fact that he was initially denied a share in the sacrificial oblations. Its first mention is to be found in the *Tait. Sam.* (II. 6.8), which tells us that when the gods excluded Shiva from a share in the sacrifice (*makha*), he pierced it with his dart, whereupon the gods offered him his share. In the *Shat. Br.* it is stated that when the sacrifice fled from the gods in the form of a deer and when the gods found it, they stripped it of its skin and brought the skin with them. The same *Brahmana* (I 7.3) further adds that when Rudra was denied his share, he could get it only by threatening the gods. This story is further developed in the *Gopatha Br.* (1.2), which says that in the conflict that ensued after Rudra pierced the sacrifice, the gods Bhaga, Savitru and Pushan lost their limbs. These earlier versions of the myth do not connect the sacrifice with Daksha, and the later stories of Dakshayajna seem to be legends. In Vaishampayana's time, however, the legend of Dakshayajna was well-known, as he mentions the destruction of Daksha's sacrifice by

1. Ibid. Dandekar p. 66

2. XIII. 17

Shiva.<sup>1</sup> In this account we notice the reluctance on the part of the Vedic seers to admit an alien god in their pantheon and allot him a regular share in the sacrifice.

Vaishampayana describes Shiva as smoke-coloured with a blue neck and matted locks. He has three eyes, for when Uma playfully closed his two eyes, he created the third eye. He is clad in animal skins, smears himself with ashes and bears skulls in his hands. He is a night-wanderer who frequents the cremation grounds in the company of ghosts and spirits. His abnormal proportions and shapes are described in the Anushasanaparva.<sup>2</sup> He carries the pinaka bow, the thunderbolt, a flaming trident, a club, an iron dagger and a pestle. He wears a garland of aksha seeds or Karnikara (*pterospermum ace-rifolium*) flowers. The bull is his mount as well as his emblem. The other creature closely associated with Shiva is the cobra. Shiva is frequently described as wearing the cobra round his neck (*nagopavita*) instead of the sacred thread. His terrible aspect (*ghora tanu*) is specifically brought out in the Bharata, justifying his equation with Rudra, the dreadful God, who sends blights of diseases when he is enraged. He also had the reputation of being the destroyer of animals, suggestive of his character as a hunter. The epic also mentions his benevolent aspect for which he is known as Shiva, the benevolent and later as Ashutosha, easy to please. He is also the protector of animals and so known as pashupati, as also the Lord of cows and bulls.<sup>3</sup> He is also a healing God and people in distress go to him for succour. Sages Jaigishavya, Parashara, Animandavya and Galava received his favours and Vyasa also became famous through his grace. The asura kings were his special proteges and obtained special boons by propitiating him with rigorous austerities ( VM. XIII. 18 )

From this it is clear that Lord Shiva was regarded as

1. VM. XIII. 1-2

2. XIII. 17.82-86

3. XIII. 17.136

supreme God in the time of Vaishampayana. His pre-eminent position at this time is best illustrated by the fact that most of the hymns to Shiva ( *Shiva-stuti* ) form part of Vaishampayana text. Shiva is praised by Krishna ( VII. 172 ), by Vyasa ( VII. 173 ), by the gods and sages on the eve of the burning of the three cities ( *tripuradahana*, viii. 20 ), by Ashvathama ( X. 7 ) and by Upamanyu ( XIII. 14 ). The *Shivasahasranama-stotra* and its peculiar merit ( XIII. 17, 18 ) also form part of the Bharata. This enhanced status of Shiva in Mbh. period is attested by an appropriate legend added by Vaishampayana ( VII.24 ).

We shall now briefly review the factors which led to the growth of the Shaiva religion during the epic period. Yajurveda speaks of Bhava, Sharva, Ishana, Mahadeva etc. as separate deities. In the Atharvaveda he is known by eight names; of these four Rudra, Sharva, Ugra and Ashani indicate his destructive power, while the other four Bhava, Pashupati, Mahadeva and Ishana denote his benignant forms. In the AV, however, the bearers of these names are known as separate gods. Some of these gods were worshipped in the North, for instance, the people of the Punjab, the Bahikas, worshipped god Bhava. There were a number of such local deities similar to Shiva, who slowly came to be absorbed in the Shiva theopany and some of the important conceptions of Shiva have come from them.<sup>1</sup> Only the tribal god Kartikeya remained outside this process of amalgamation, though efforts were made to bring him within the Shiva theopany, as is evident from the temple of Khandoba, which is a Shiva temple near Pune. However, later he came to be regarded as his son. All these gods except Skanda had come to be regarded as the names of one God in the Shat. and Kaushi. Brahmanas.<sup>2</sup>

Uma, who was known as a mountain goddess before also absorbed all the mother goddesses in her personality and

1. Sukumari Bhattacharji, *The Indian Theogony*, p. 137

2. R. G. Bhandarkar, *VSHR*, pp. 148, 149.

became the supreme mother goddess.<sup>1</sup> She had similar traits as Shiva, possessing both the terrible and benign forms. In her terrible form she was known as Chandi or Kali and in her benign forms as Uma or Durga. She became the spouse of Shiva and so both came to be known in the famous words of Kalidasa as jagatah pitara as parents of the world. As husband and wife they came so close to each other, that Shiva came to be known as ardhanarinateshvara i.e. a god, who is half male and half female. Initially there seems to have been considerable resistance even to the identification of Kartikeya as their son, as we get different accounts of his birth even in the epic. In XIII. 84, he is said to be the son of the fire-god ( Agni ) from the Ganga brought up by Krittikas ( the Pleiads ), but in later accounts the indirect parentage of Shiva and Uma has been suggested. The cult of a holy family has supporters all over the world, and Shiva, Uma and Kartikeya as father, mother and son, held a great appeal for the masses.<sup>2</sup> Their popularity is reflected in a number of pilgrimage spots dedicated to them as described by Pulastya to Narada.<sup>3</sup>

During the time of Vaishampayana, as stated before, Krishna had not come to be identified with Vishnu or Narayana, though the Vrishni tribe to which he belonged worshipped him as human god. However, there are four passages ( VM.VII.172-175 ) which are shown to belong to the Vaishampayana text. These seem to identify Arjuna and Krishna with the divine sages Nara and Narayana. However, they seem to have been added later, as is shown in the Dronaparva ( VII.166-167 ) which describes the release of Narayanastra by Ashvattha against the Pandavas. We are told in this section that Ashvatthama being incensed at the treacherous killing of his father Drona by Arjuna, had employed it against the Pandavas, which his father Drona had secured by worship of god Narayana and it was sufficiently powerful to kill any warrior who offered fight. Had Krishna been identified with

1. Ibid. p. 174

2. Ibid. pp. 159-160

3. III. 80-83 added by Harivamshakara

Narayana at this time, he himself would have offered to recall it or the Pandavas would have implored him to do so. However, Krishna simply advised the Pandavas not to offer fight but placate it by dismounting and discarding their arms.<sup>1</sup>

Arjuna and Krishna had come to be identified with the divine sages Nara and Narayana in the time of Suta, who refers to it in the Ashramvasika ( 39.11 ), and this identification had come to be established in the days of Sauti, who mentions it on a number of occasions. Harivamshakara also refers to it in VII. 171. Panini refers to this identification in his Sutra ( IV. 3-98 ), where he derives the words to denote the worshippers of Arjuna and Vaasudeva. The implication of the dvandva compound vaasudevakarjunkabhyam is that both were regarded as divine and worshipped as such by devotees known as Vasudevakas and Arjunakas. Although their worship seems to have been fairly common in the days of Panini to justify the special derivation of the above terms, no religious sects seem to have been associated with their names at this time. The Buddhist canonical text Anguttaranikya, which refers to such religions as the Ajivakas, the Nirgranthas etc. does not refer to the Vasudevakas or the Arjunakas.

As pointed out by Kane ( p. xi ), the worship of Vaasudeva Krishna as the Supreme God must be regarded as old as Panini. The panegyrics of Lord Krishna in the Mbh. have been added by Sauti and later redactors of the epic. Thus Sauti has inserted in the Shantiparva the Krishnamamastuti by Yudhishthira ( 43 ), the Bhishmastavarja ( 47 ) and the Krishnamahatmya ( 200 ). Thus by the middle of the fifth century B.C. the supreme godhead of Vaasudeva Krishna with his identification with Vishnu had been clearly established. This is further confirmed

1. Although the adhyayas VII. 172-175 have been shown to belong to the Vaishampayana text, further examination showed that the adhyaya 173 was added by the author of the Parvasangraha and the other three adhyayas were added by Harivamshakara

by Megasthenis ( 4th century B.C. ), who states that Heracles ( by which he obviously refers to Harikrishna ) was held in veneration by the people of Shurasena. Further Harivamshakara had added the Mahapurushastava<sup>1</sup> ( xii. 325 ) and the Bhagvan-nama-nirvachana<sup>2</sup> ( xii. 328, 330 ) and the author of the Parvasangrha has added the Vishnusahasranama<sup>3</sup> ( xiii. 135 ). Thus by the end of the first millennium B.C., there emerged another figure, in the religious firmament rivalling Shiva in grandeur. This enhanced status of Shiva and Vishnu by the first century A.D. is attested by the fact that the two Ashmedha sacrifices described in the Uttarakanda of Ramayana ( 1st century A.D. ) are offered to them. One is offered by Indra to Vishnu to free himself from the sin of the brahmin-slaughter, which he had incurred by killing Vritra ( UR 7.77 ). and the second is offered to Shiva to secure Ila's restoration to manhood ( UR. 7.81 ).

There is sufficient evidence to show that in Sauti's time ( 450 B.C. ), Vasudeva Krishna had come to be identified as an incarnation of Vishnu. In the Vamshavatarana ( I. 61 ) it is stated that Vasudeva was a partial incarnation of Narayana, the god of gods. This is repeated in the Sabhaparva ( 33 ), where it is said that Narayana, the Lord of the world was born in the house of the Yadus. In the Udyogaparva ( 81 ), Krishna is described as Srivatsakritalakshana i.e. one who bears the mark of a curl of hair on his chest, which is the mark of Vishnu. When sage Kanva advised Duryodhana to come to terms with Pandavas ( V. 103 ). he said that Krishna was none else than Vishnu, the bearer of the discuss and the mace. Even Bhishma told Duryodhana that Vaasudeva was Narayana and should not be disregarded as a human being ( VI. 63, Sauti ).

The enhanced status of Shiva and Vishnu in the Mbh.

1. HM. XII. 325

2. HM. XII. 328, 330

3. PM. XIII. 135

period is attested by appropriate legends added by Vaishampaya and its later redactors. The legend of Tripuradahana, narrated by Vaishampayana ( VIII. 24 ), describes the extraordinary feat of Shiva in which Shiva burnt the three cities and killed the three demons by which he became famous in the Vedic circles, earning the sobriquet Tripurari. Another legend which is suggestive of Shiva's growing influence in the Gangetic plain is his holding the Ganga in his matted hair, as he alone could bear the force of her descending current. This has been added by Suta. Vaishampayana seems to have known this legend, as he calls Shiva Jahnavidhara i.e. holder of the Ganga. Similar legends came to be invented later when the devotees of Vishnu set up claims of superiority of their god. It is obvious that in the Vulgate Harivamsha<sup>1</sup> the legend of Vishnu's destroying six Asura towns ( shatpura ) was thought of to raise him above Shiva who had destroyed only three Asura cities. Later we find Harivanshakara retelling the story of Dakshayajna<sup>2</sup> so as to bring out the hegemony of Shiva.

Vishnu, on the other hand is known from the very beginning as a god of activity. The Rigvedic Vishnu assisted Indra in his wars with Vritra and other Asura kings.<sup>3</sup> In the Brahmana period, he was identified with sacrifice, which was the most important religious activity in those times and was also famous for his three strides. In the Mbh. we are told that he killed Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakashipu and humbled Bali by assuming respectively the forms of the Boar, the Man-lion and the Dwarf. It is stated in the Nara-Narayaniya section of the Shantiparva ( HM.335-87 ) that dharma characterised by active life constitutes the very nature of Narayana.<sup>4</sup>

The Gita also calls Krishna-Vaasudeva as Yogeshvara of

1. H. V. 2-82, Chitrashala Press edition

2. XII. 330

3. RV. VII > 99.4

4. pravritti lakshmanash chaiva dharma narayatmekah

a different kind, because of his creative activity, which brings into being the existence of things ( xi.4 ). Even in his incarnations, he performs actions with detachment and so his actions do not bind him. This creative activity is, therefore, the highest form of Yoga, justifying his apithat as Yogeshvara. Hence devotees who are inclined to activity ( pravritti ) and self-expression worship him by performing actions without attachment and without desire for the fruits of action.

Both Suta and Sauti found it necessary to give a plausible explanation for the identification of the human Vrishni hero with Lord Vishnu and based it on the avatara theory. Suta refers to the four incarnations of Vishnu, namely the boar, the man-lion and the dwarf ( SM.100.19 ) and later to Dasharathi Rama ( SM.188.III.299 ). Sauti also mentions the first three incarnations of Narayana ( I.61 ), to which Harivanshakara adds Bhargava Rama as an incarnation, increasing the number to six ( HM. XII. 326 ). But surprisingly the latter does not allude to the fish incarnation, although he narrates the legend of the Fish ( HM. III. 185 ). These six incarnations are also mentioned by him in the Harivansha. He also refers to Kalki, but this could be a later interpolation. Among the Puranas, Vayu and Bhagavata give different number or different names, although they include the six avatars mentioned above. In one passage, the Vayu Purana gives the number of avatars as ten by adding to the six mentioned above. Dattatreya, one unnamed called the fifth, Vedavyasa and Kalki. It is only in Varaha purana, we get the ten incarnations which came to be accepted later, namely the Fish, the Tortoise, the six mentioned above, Buddha and Kalki. Thus the doctrine of the ten incarnations is a much later development.

The epigraphic evidence also shows the prevalence of the worship of Krishna and temples dedicated to him and Balarama since the early centuries before the Christian era. The earliest representation of any deity in the whole field of Hindu religion

is that of Balarama, which cannot be placed later than the second century B.C.<sup>1</sup> There are two inscribed Garuda columns found near Besanagar, which can be placed near the second century B.C. The earlier of these was erected by Heliodorus, who represented himself to be a Bhagavata, in honour of Vaasudeva, the God of gods. Heliodorus had come on a political mission from Antalikita to Bhagabhadra, who must have ruled over eastern Malwa. The second was erected by Maharaja Bhagavata of the Shunga dynasty.<sup>2</sup>

Thus by the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C. there emerged another figure on the religious horizon rivaling Shiva in grandeur. In the Shanti and Anushasana parvas, we read one account after another in which either of these gods sets up a claim to priority and supremacy. Both these sects had priestly classes with large followings, who set up claims of superiority for their respective god. We are told in the Dronaparva ( 172-52 ) that Narayana practised regorous penance on the Mainaka mountain and received boons from Shiva, the holder of the Pinaka. Later in the Shanti. 330, we find Harivamshakara retelling the story of Dakshayajna so as to bring out the hegemony of Lord Narayana. There we are told that after the last dart hurled by Shiva consumed Daksha's sacrifice, it fell with great force on the chest of Narayana. Narayana then gripped Shiva by the throat and a fight ensued. When Shiva and Narayana were thus locked in battle, the whole world was filled with anxiety. Later Brahma brought about a reconciliation between the two, whereupon Narayana addressed Shiva thus : " He that knows you knows me; he that follows you follows me. There is no difference between you and me, the mark made by your dart on my chest will remain as a beautiful whirl ( shrivatsa ), while the mark made by my clutch on your throat will make you known as Srikantha, It is obvious that in the

1. Agrawala, T 150A, 1937, p. 136

2. Archaeology and Vaishanava Tradition, MASI, No. 5, Calcutta, 1920  
pp. 161-163, 166, 169, 171.

3. Chitrashala Press Edition 2.82

vulgate edition of Harivamsha,<sup>3</sup> the legend of Vishnu'sfeat of destroying six Asura towns ( shatpura ) was thought of to raise him above Shiva, who had destroyed only three Asura cities ( tripura ).

Both these cults had an irresistible appeal to the common people, as they were based on monotheism, which was more easy to comprehend than the abstract monism of the Upanishads. Shaivism flourished by the amalgamation of all local gods possessing common attributes with Shiva, while Vaishnavism became popular with the identification of Vishnu with the Satvata god Narayana and the Vaasudeva Krishna. No further synthesis was possible between these two cults. Harihara was tried as a symbol of a possible synthesis between the two, but it did not work. This is because Shiva and Vishnu symbolised two different aspects of life and commanded the allegiance of different types of devotees. As pointed out by Sukumari Bhattacharji, although Shiva is the only God who is frequently described with his family, he lives on the cremation ground, with no ties to the outside world. He is usually represented as lost in meditation or practicing rigorous austerities. When sage Markandeya danced with joy as vegetable juice oozed out from his wound, Shiva discomfited him by pressing one finger on another when ashes fell out from it. ( III. 81 ). The ashes symbolise complete mortification of the body, the triumph of the spirit over the flesh. We come across many episodes in the Mbh., which suggest that self-mortification was associated with the cult of Shiva. Shiva was thus the ascetic par excellence, the Yogishvara who typified complete inactivity and withdrawal from the world ( nivritti ). Hence devotees with a contemplative bent of mind and inclined to self-abnegation worship him.

Vishnu, on the other hand, is known from the very beginning as a God of activity ( pravritti ). The Rigvedic

1. RV. VII. 99.4

Vishnu assisted Indra in his wars with Vritra and other Asuras.<sup>1</sup> In the Brahmanic period, he was identified with sacrifice, which was the most important religious activity in those times. In the epic we read that he killed Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakashipu and humbled Bali by assuming respectively the forms of the boar, the man-lion and the dwarf ( vamana ). It is stated in the Nara-Naraayaniya section that dharma characterised by active life constitutes the very nature of Vishnu-Narayana.<sup>1</sup> The holy family for the Vaishnavas consists of Vishnu as the embodiment of everlasting dharma ( Gita, xiv. 211 ), his wife Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and his son Madana or Kama, god of love, representing respectively the first three aims ( purusharthas ) concerned with worldly life. The Yoga of the Gita is not the yoga of meditation to be practiced in solitude, but the Yoga of action, which is to be pursued for the attainment of the first three purusharthas and also for social solidarity and the good of the world ( loksangraha, iii. 25 ). The Gita further declares that this Yoga of action, when performed without selfish interest and sense of self-importance, leads to the fourth purushartha, namely liberation. The teaching of Lord Krishna has, therefore, a popular appeal for those who wish to lead and enjoy an active life. Finally as a result of these contradictory attitudes of the two cults, the religious thinkers appear to have adopted the Trimurti conception of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva as the different forms of the Supreme God, fulfilling respectively the functions of creation, preservation and destruction.

This is not a proper place to deal with the spread of Buddhism in the country. I can do no better than quote two passages from Radhakrishnan's work on Indian Philosophy.<sup>1</sup> (1) "At a time when bloody sacrifices were not yet out of fashion, the teaching of mercy to all creation had a tremendous effect. His opposition to ceremonialism contributed largely to recommend his doctrine to the masses. This sublime grandeur of

1. Pravritti lakshnas heava dharma narayanatmakah. HM. XII. 335-37

Buddha's teaching may be gathered from the following utterances of his : "Never in this world does hatred cease by hatred – hatred ceases by love." "Victory breeds hatred, for the conquered is unhappy." "One may conquer a thousand men in battle, but he who conquers himself is the greatest victor." "Let a man overcome anger by kindness, evil by good." Not by birth, but by his conduct alone, does a man become a low-caste or a brahmin." (2) The missionary spirit of Buddha's followers contributed considerably to the spread of his gospel. Buddha who bade his disciples : "Go into all lands and preach this gospel. Tell them that the poor and the lowly, the rich and the high are all one and that all castes unite in this religion as do the rivers in the sea." Dr. Radhakrishnan concludes, "Buddhism succeeded so well because it was a religion of love, giving voice to all the inarticulate forces which were working against the established order and the ceremonial religion, addressing itself to the poor, the lowly and disinherited." It was, therefore, fitting that in the Varaha Purana, we get the name of Buddha included in the ten incarnations which came to be included later, namely the fish, the tortoise, the six mentioned above, Buddha and Kalki.

## EPIC MYTHOLOGY

### Legends of Heroes

Among the upkhyanas added subsequently by its redactors to the Mbh, the Bhargava legends account for the largest number and the greatest variety. Sukthankar has made a thorough and critical study of these legends in his Paper, Epic Studies VI, which is now incorporated in the Sukthankar Memorial Edition. He calls Mbh. a veritable thesaurus of Bhargava legends' and points out that compared to this epic Ramayana contains very few references to Bhargavas. There is only a solitary reference to Rama Jamdagnya in which he challenges Rama Dasharathi, who has broken the bow of Shiva and is worsted in the encounter. Sukthankar, however, thought it best to examine the Bhargava material in the sequence in which it appeared in the Mbh. and so has studied it 'book by book' and chapter by chapter. My object is to show how the myths and legends in the epic illustrate that the observance of the moral law leads to prosperity and a place in heaven, while its neglect leads to perdition and hell.

As we saw before, Vaishmpayana has added only the legend of Vasu Uparichara in the Bharata. The later redactors have enriched the epic by the additions of myths and legends. In the additions made by Suta, we come across such myths as those of

Agastya, Rishyashringa, Mandhatri, Jantu, Shyenakpotiya and Ashtavakra ( Aranyaka ) and of Galava ( Udyoga ). Among the more important legends added by Sauti are those of Sunda and Upasunda ( Adi ), Savitri and Satyavan ( Aranyaka ); Viduraputranushasana ( Shanti ), Nachiketa ( Anushasana ) and Uttanka ( Ashramavasika ). Harivanshakara has added the Nalopakhyan, the story of the deluge, the Matsyopakhyan, the tale of the frog god, the Ramopakhyan ( Aranyaka ), Sarasvatopakhyan ( Shalya ) and Narada's visit to Shvetadvipa.

In the Critical Edition of the Aranyakaparva, Sukthankar himself points out that the Aranyaka contains episodes of diverse kinds, stories of ancient kings and sages and of virtuous women, ancient gathas and stanzas relating to genealogical tables ( anuvarmsha ). As regards these episodes, Pusalkar observes ( p. 123 ) that these are not subsequent elaborations secondarily introduced, but formed part of the original epic, its purpose being to fill up temporary hiatuses in the narrative ( namely the twelve years of exile etc. ). The statistical study shows that except for the episode of Uparichara in the Vaishampayana text, all the myths and legends have been added by the subsequent redactors. The epic bards did not stop with the heroic tales of the principal characters in the Bharata war, but have also tried to glorify their ancestors by suitable myths and legends. It is, therefore, proposed to start with the legends of Vasu Uparichara and take up the myths and legends added by them for the glorification of the principal characters and their ancestors in the epic. It is not possible to do full justice to all the myths and legends in the epic, but an attempt will be made to deal with the more important of them, especially those which find a mention in the Anukramani and explain how they came to be included in the epic.

Vaishampayana himself has added the legend of king Vasu Uparichara to describe the parentage of Satyavati, who became the mother of sage Vyasa and the wife of the Kuru King Shantanu. King Uparichara was devoted to virtue, but was fond

of hunting. This king of the Paurava race conquered the kingdom of Cedi under instruction of god Indra. After becoming the king of Cedi he performed great sacrifices and the festival of Indra. He was much respected by Indra, who gifted to him an aerial car and since he coursed through the sky in it, he came to be called Uparichara. When his wife Girika finished her monthly period and was ready for him, he was asked by his forefathers to bring deer meat for offering it to them on the shraddha day. When he had gone hunting for this purpose, he was still thinking of his wife. Being further excited by the fragrance of the flowers and the seductive breeze, he shed his seed and asked a hawk to take it to his wife. On the way this hawk was seen by another hawk, which flew at it, thinking that it was carrying a piece of meat in its mouth. While they were fighting with each other, the seed fell into the water of the river Yamuna and was swallowed by a female fish. This female fish was in reality a celestial nymph, who was transformed into the form of a fish by the curse of a brahmin. After a period of ten months, this fish was caught by a fisherman, and when he opened the stomach of the fish, there came out a male and a female child. The fisherman took those children to the king Uparichara and narrated to him the story of their birth. The king adopted the male child and handed over the female child to the fisherman, who adopted her and named her Satyavati. When this child grew up as a maiden, she was endowed with great beauty and had a pleasant and smiling face. She, however, smelt of fish, as she passed her time among the fishermen. She tried to serve her father by plying a boat on the waters of the Yamuna.

One day when she was plying the boat, she was seen by the great sage Parashara, who happened to come there in the course of his wandering. The sage instantly conceived a passion for her and expressed his desire to mate with her. When the bashful maiden demurred on the ground that they would be seen by others, he created a fog so that they could not be seen

by others. He told her that she would retain her virginity even after their union and that her body would exude a sweet fragrance instead of the smell of fish. Satyavati then coyly submitted to the embrace of the sage and conceived and gave birth on that very day to a son endowed with great lustre. Thus Vyasa was born of Satyavati through Parashara. After taking permission of his mother, Vyasa set his heart on becoming a hermit. He came to be known as Dvaipayana as he was born on an island (dvipa) on the Yamuna and as Veda-Vyasa, as he later became a Vedic scholar. He taught Sumanta, Paila, his own son Shuka and his disciple Vaishampayana, whom he instructed to compose the story of the Bharata war.

The birth of the Pandavas is shrouded in mystery. Vaishampayana, as we saw, merely states (I. 55.57) that Pandu had five sons, of whom the first three Yudhisthira, Bhima and Arjuna were born from Dharma, the god of justice, Bhima from Marut, god of wind, Arjuna from Indra, the god of heavens and the twins from the Ashvins. Thus although the Kauravas knew that they were not Pandu's sons, we find that none of them, not even Duryodhan questioned their right to the throne on that ground. For while counselling peace to Duryodhana, even Dhritarashtra asked Duryodhana how the latter could stake his claim to the throne, when he himself was not entitled to it.<sup>1</sup> They were all known as Pandu's sons according to the Vedic rule that the child bore the name of the person, who took the mother's hand in wedlock.<sup>2</sup> Sauti states (I. 1.113) that when Pandu came to know that he could not produce his own children because of the sage's curse, he tried to persuade Kunti to beget them through a brahmin. He told her that he himself owed his birth to Krishna Dvaipayana, who had agreed to produce children in the wives of Vichitravirya for the preservation of the Kuru race. Then Kunti told Pandu that she had served sage Durvasa when he had come to her father's

1. HMV. 147.30

2. Mbh. I-98. Sauti.

palace and had received charms (mantras) by which she could summon a deity and produce a child through him. After first three sons were born to her by invoking Dharma, Marut and Indra, Pandu persuaded Kunti to give the charms to Madri, who begot the twins by invoking the two Ashvins.

Sauti has added a myth about the birth of Karna (I.104), who was well known for his munificence. Sura, the grandfather of Krishna was a worthy king of the Yadava race. He had a virtuous and beautiful daughter Pritha, whom he gave in adoption to his cousin Kuntibhoja, who was childless. From that time she came to be known as Kunti. When Kunti was a girl, the sage Durvasa had stayed for some time as a guest in her father's palace. She served the sage with such care and devotion that he gave her a divine mantra and told her that if she repeated the mantra and called upon any god, he would appear before her and bless her with a son. Kunti was curious to know the efficacy of the mantra and repeated it by invoking the sun. Instantly the sun appeared before her and started gazing at her in admiration. Kunti was abashed to see him and told him that she merely wanted to test the power of the mantra. She pleaded with him to forgive her folly and go back. He told her that he was bound by the mantra to give her a son, but assured her that after giving birth to the son, she would still remain a virgin. Kunti gave birth to a son who was as bright and handsome as the sun. He was also born with divine armor and ear-rings. In order to hide her shame, Kunti placed the child in a box and set it afloat in the river. A childless charioteer saw the floating case and took it home. He was surprised and delighted to find a handsome child and took it to his wife, who brought him up with a mother's care. When the boy grew up, he became one of the world's greatest heroes in his time.

Vaishampayana merely states that Bhishma, the grandsire of Kurus, was born in the womb of Ganga by king Shantanu. Sauti has composed a beautiful legend in Adi. 94 after identifying this Ganga with the river goddess Ganga. When

Shantanu had gone to the bank of the river Ganga, a maiden met him there intoxicating his senses with her superhuman loveliness.' He proposed marriage to her and she also agreed to it on the condition that he would not come in the way of whatever she did, good or bad and that she would leave him if he broke this promise. The infatuated king gave her assent and they lived happily. But when she gave birth to a child, she took the baby to the river and cast it into the water. She thus killed seven children and each time she came back with a smiling face. But when the eighth child was born and she was about to take it to the river, he restrained her. She said, "O great king, you have broken your promise. Since I have spared your child, you do not need me. I am the goddess Ganga adored by gods and men. I had to play this hateful role, because the eight Vasus were cursed by Vasishtha to be born in this world of human beings. Please listen to this story before you judge me."

Then Ganga told Shantanu how the Vasus came to incur Vasishtha's curse. Once when the Vasus went with their wives to a mountain forest, they came upon Vashistha's hermitage. There they saw the sage's cow Nandini grazing there and all of them admired the graceful animal. The wife of one of them pressed her husband Prabhava to carry her away with them. He tried to dissuade her by saying that it was not worth incurring Vashistha's wrath. Finally her husband yielded and they carried away the cow with them. When Vashistha noticed the absence of the cow on his return, he came to know by his yogic power all that had come to pass. He was so enraged that he cursed them that they would be born into the world of men. When the Vasus came to know of the sage's curse, they threw themselves on his mercy and begged for his forgiveness. The sage relented and said that except for Prabhava, who had seized the cow, all others would be freed from the curse as soon as they were born. The Vasus felt relieved and requested me to marry a worthy king and throw them into the river after their birth. Farewell, O king, now I shall leave you according to our agreement, but I

shall leave with you one son of great promise so that you can bring him up with loving care. So saying the goddess disappeared. But in adhyaya 94, we have a different version, which says that Ganga took her son with her and brought him back when he had become a young boy, which seems to have been added by a subsequent redactor.<sup>1</sup>

The legend of Mandavya, also known as Animandvya, added by Sauti (I. 101) describes the birth of Vidura, the uncle of the Kauravas and Pandavas. He was well-known for his knowledge of dharmashastra and statesmanship. Mandavya (I. 57) spent his days in penance and practice of truth. Once when he was immersed in deep penance, some robbers entered his ashrama to hide with their booty. The soldiers of the king were in hot pursuit and tracking their foot-prints came to this hermitage. When they questioned the sage whether he had seen the robbers passing by and where they had gone, they received no reply, as the sage was wrapt up in deep meditation. The soldiers thought that he was the chief of the robbers and was feigning to be a sage to escape punishment. They reported the matter to the king, who without making proper inquiries, ordered that the criminal should be impaled. As the sage was practising penance, he did not die. The sages who lived in the forest came to see him and asked him how he had come to be in that state. He replied that the king whose duty it was to protect his subjects, had inflicted this punishment on him. When the king came to know that the offender, though impaled, was still alive and was surrounded by other sages, he became frightened, went to see him and asked for his forgiveness. Mandavya was not angry with the king but went to Dharma, the god of justice and asked him for what crime of his, he was made to suffer this torture. Dharma replied in all humility that he had tortured the birds and bees as a child and so had to

1. Although this adhyaya is included in Sauti's group, its mean square is 4017.6 with variance 446.4 (d.f. 9), which shows clearly that it belongs to the Beta group and has been added by the author of the Parvasangraha.

suffer this punishment. The sage replied that the punishment given to him was far in excess for the mistakes committed by him as a child in ignorance and cursed him. As a result of this curse Dharma was born as Vidura, brother of Dhritarashtra and Pandu, who was renowned for his wisdom, righteousness and strict impartiality. He tried to dissuade Dhritarashtra not to grant permission to the dice game and tried his best to prevent the war.

Both Suta and Sauti have added legends to glorify the ancestors of the heroes who figure in the Bharata of Vaishampayana. In Adi. 160-62. Suta tells us how Tapati, daughter of Surya got married to Samvarana, father of Kuru, the ancestor of the Kauravas and Pandavas. In Adi 62, Sauti has given the legend of Dushyanta and Shakuntala, daughter of nymph Menaka, who were the parents of Bharata, the originator of the Kuru dynasty. He also traces the ancestry of the Kauravas and Pandavas to Puru, the youngest son of Yayati; a king of the lunar race and Sharmishta, daughter of Vrishparva, king of the asuras. He has also added the legend of Yayati and Devayani, daughter of the great asura priest Shukra, whose eldest son Yadu was the progenitor of the Yadava race to which Krishna belonged.

Suta gives the legend how Samvarana, a famous ancestor of the Pandavas came to marry Tapati, daughter of sun-god ( Adi. 90 ). Samvarana was the son of Riksha and grandson of Ajamidha. Once Tapati, who was born from the shadow of Vivasvat Surya, was seen by Samvarana, who had gone out hunting on a mountin. When he saw her matchless beauty, he fell in love with her and wanted to have her as his wife. He told her that he would like to get married to her according to the gandharva form of marriage. But she disappeared and the king fell down senseless. She, however, reappeared and told him that she was the daughter of Surya and could not marry him without her father's consent. On seeing the king's state, Vashistha, the hereditary priest of the Ishvaku kings, went to her father Surya

and managed to secure his consent to his daughter's marriage with the king. Pargiter says that the story may have a historical background, as Tapati may have been the daughter of a king named Surya and that this history had come to be mythologised in course of time.<sup>1</sup>

Sauti has given in Adi (104) the myth of Dushyanta and Shakuntala whose son Bharata was the ancestor of the Kauravas and Pandavas. Dushyanta was king of the lunar race and descendent of Puru and Shakuntala was the daughter of sage Vishvamitra and nymph Menaka. When Vishvamitra started rigorous austerities, gods became afraid and sent nymph Menaka to interrupt his penance. After enticing the sage, Menaka gave birth to a female child and went to heaven, after leaving the new born baby girl on the bank of a river. Birds ( shakuntas ) took care of the child and so she came to be known as Shakuntala. Sage Kanva found her and adopted her as his daughter. Shakuntala grew up to be a beautiful maiden. When king Dushyanta lost his way while he had gone out for hunting, he arrived at the hermitage of Kanva. In the absence of sage Kanva, Shakuntala greeted him and rendered him all the hospitality due to an honoured guest. She also narrated to him how she was born as a daughter of Vishvamitra and Menaka and was later brought up by Kanva. The king was so fascinated by her beauty that he proposed to marry her then and there by the gandharva form of marriage. Shakuntala gave her consent after taking a promise from him that her son would become his heir-apparent. After spending a few days with her, Dushyanta went away to his capital. Shakuntala in due course gave birth to a son in the hermitge. When her son Bharata was about six years old, Kanva advised Shakuntala to take him to the king. When she took him to the king's court and declared him to be his son, Dushyanta ( fearing a public scandal ) declined all knowledge of her. Shakuntala was so upset that she was about

1. Pargiter, AIHT, p. 66

to leave the court in anger, when a voice from heaven declared that Bharata was Dushyanta's son. Then the king asked for the forgiveness of his wife and installed Bharata as his crown prince. Though this story is a myth, Ait Br. ( I. 104 ) mentions that he was crowned king by Dirghatamas Mamateya and the Shat Br. ( XIII. 5.4 ) states that he had performed an ashvamedha sacrifice. Bharata became an illustrious monarch and the country came to be known as Bharatavarsha after him.

Kurushravana was a king of the Kuru tribe, who was a descendant of Trasadasyu, a well-known king of the Purus<sup>1</sup>. The epic tradition too, which dates from Vaishampayana, traces the tribe of the Kurus to Puru in Udyoga. 147. The Kuru kings are said to belong to the lunar race, being the descendants of Soma, the Moon-God. Puru is mentioned as the youngest son of Yayati, son of Nahusha, sixth in descent from Soma. Although Yadu was the eldest son of Yayati, he was full of hauteur and disrespectful to his father. Yayati, therefore, gave his kingdom to Puru, who showed filial affection and obedience to him. Bharata and Dushyanta were descended from him. In Drona. 119, Vishampyana traces the lineage of Vasudeva, father of Krishna to Yadu, son of Yayati and Devayani. Here Yayati is said to be the son of Nahusha, sixth in descent from Soma. The genealogy is given as follows : Atri – Soma – Budha – Pururava – Aayu – Nahusha, Yayati – Yadu – Vasudeva. It is stated there that Yayati was the son of Nahusha; sixth in descent from Soma, but he is said to be the grandson of Pururavas, whom he mentions as grandson of Soma, fourth in descent from Atri ( MGG, p. 65 ). Thus Soma seems to have been the son of Atri, who came to be mythologised as the moon-god.

Vrishparva, an asura king, was aided by his preceptor Shukra to carry on a struggle with the gods. He became invincible by the gods, as Shukra had the power to revive the

1. Rigveda. VII-19.

dead warriors by his Sanjivani mantra. Once Sharmishtha, the daughter of the asura king, was bathing in a lake along with Devayani, daughter of Shukra and other friends.<sup>1</sup> They had left their clothes on the bank and these got mixed up by a strong wind. On getting out of the water Sharmishtha put on Devayani's clothes by mistake, which led to a violent quarrel between them. Sharmishtha taunted her that her father was a humble panegyrist of her father, and that she should consider it an honour to wear her clothes. The quarrel became so heated that Sharmishtha pushed Devayani into a well and walked away. Shortly thereafter, Yayati son of Nahusha, a king of the lunar race, passed by that well and seeing Devayani fallen into it, raised her up. When Devayani told her father all that had happened, he became so upset that he wanted to leave the court of Vrishparva then and there. As the king wanted to retain him at any cost, he pleaded with him not to leave his court and promised to do anything which Devayani desired. Devayani wanted Sharmishtha to serve her as a house-maid and the king persuaded his daughter to serve her with proper respect. Sharmishtha then left the king's palace and stayed with Devayani.

Some time later Devayani went into the forest with her friends and there she met again king Yayati. After knowing who he was, Devayani offered her hand to him. After consulting her father Shukra and obtaining his consent, he took her as his wife. Then Devayani went to stay with her husband and Sharmishtha, her housemaid also went with her. One day when Sharmishtha met Yayati, she persuaded him that a maiden should look upon her friend's husband as her own husband. Yayati accepted her suit, but knowing Devayani's temper kept it a secret.<sup>2</sup> In course of time Devayani bore him two sons, Yadu and Turvasu and

1. Mbh. I. 72-73, Sauti

2. Mbh. I. 72-73, Sauti.

Sharmishtha gave birth to three sons Druhyu, Anu and Puru. When one of Sharmishtha's sons addressed Yayati as father in the presence of Devayani, she became furious and complained to her father, who cursed Yayati with old age and decrepitude. After a great deal of solicitation, Shukra modified his curse to the extent that the Yayati would be able to exchange his old age with anyone who was willing to do so. When he asked his five sons if anyone would do so, only Puru agreed to the exchange. After enjoying youth and prosperity for many years, it dawned upon Yayati that "desire does not reach satiation with the enjoyment of pleasure, but increases like fire fed with oblations." He, therefore, decided to renounce the world and repair to the forest to perform penance. He restored the youth to Puru and made him his successor to the throne. This Puru was the ancestor of the Kauravas and the Pandavas and Yadu of the Yadavas<sup>1</sup>.

Sauti has added the legend of Sunda and Upasunda<sup>2</sup> to show how their arrogance led to their downfall. They were two terrible sons of demon Nikumbha, who were greatly attached to each other. They propitiated god Brahma by prayers and each obtained from him boons of incomparable valour and strength, the power to assume any form and indestructibility from anyone except his brother. As a result of this boon, they became arrogant and reckless and began to harass the people. They also began to trouble the sages and obstructed them in performing the sacrifices. Then Brahma thought of putting a stop to it and asked Vishvakarma to create a very beautiful nymph. This nymph Tilottama, as instructed by him, began to dance before the two brothers, who forgot their brotherly affection and began to fight each other in order to win her. The fight came to end in their killing each other.

1. Adi, 78-81.

2. Mbh. I. 201-204 ( Sauti ).

### Bhargava Legends :

We find from the statistical study that most of the Bhargava legends have been added by Suta and Sauti. The Vaishampayana text, it is true, does contain a number of references to Bhargava Rama, whose valour is held to be a standard for comparison for the Bharata heroes in the Bhargava episodes. Thus Bhishma is praised as the hero whom even Bhargava Rama could not defeat. In trying to persuade Shalya to act as a charioteer to Karna, Duryodhana told him how Karna had obtained celestial weapons from Bhargava Rama, who had received them from Mahadeva after destroying gods' enemies. Of the Bhargava legends, the Vishvamitropakhyana in Anushasana ( 4 ) alone belongs to the Vaishampayana text. But the main interest in the narration is to show how rigid the class system had become, which made it difficult even for Vishvamitra to become a brahmin. Suta has added the legends of Aurva in the Adi and the legend of Kartavirya in Aranyaka.

Suta has added the Aurvopakhyana in Adi<sup>1</sup> which Sukthankar calls 'a digression within a digression' as Chitraratha tells this story to Arjuna as related by Vasishtha to his son Parashara. In the ancient times there was a king Kartavirya of the Haihayas, who had bestowed great wealth on their family priests, Bhrigus. When after his death his heirs demanded the wealth back, the Bhrigus returned much of it but not all. When the Haihayas discovered by chance a hoard of wealth laying buried in the land of the Bhrigus, they regarded it as perfidy and killed all the Bhrigus, not sparing even their pregnant women. One of the women, however, had concealed her embryo in her thigh and taken shelter in the Himalayas. When the Haihayas came to know of it, they pursued her with the intention of destroying her embryo. The child then came out of his mother's thigh and its very brilliance blinded the Haihayas. The child eventually forgave them on the advice of

1. SH.I.169-173.

his mother, but practiced severe penance to destroy the wicked world. When the shades of his ancestors came to know about this, they tried to dissuade him from carrying out his terrible resolve. Aurva, so called because he had come out of his mother's thigh (uru), told them that if he did not find an outlet for his anger, he himself would be consumed by the fire of his wrath. The ancestors told him to throw the fire of his wrath in the waters, which constitute the world. Aurva did so, and now his wrath, in the shape of the horse's head (hayashiras), dwells in the ocean consuming its waters (MGG. p. 25).

In the myth of the Kartavirya (III. 115-117), Suta gives in greater detail the episode of the exchange of charus. In the course of their pilgrimage, the Pandavas happened to go to mount Mahendra, where Rama Jamadagnya had retired after his formidable exploits. The story is told by Akritavarna, an attendant of Bhargava Rama. In this case it was Bhrigu or Richika's father who granted the boon of a son to Richika's wife and her mother. Satyavati persuaded her daughter to exchange the carus in the hope that she would get a better son. When Satyavati came to know the likely result of the exchange of potions, she obtained a further boon for postponing the action of the charm to her grandson. As a result Jamadagni, her son was born with brahminical qualities. He married Renuka, daughter of king Prasenajit. She gave birth to five sons, of whom the youngest was Rama, who on account of the charm, turned out to be a mighty warrior.<sup>1</sup> Then one day, Arjun Kartavirya, king of Anupa, came to the hermitage of Jamadagni and while leaving took away forcibly the calf of the sacred cow kamdhenu. When Rama came to know about this, he killed the arrogant king and Arjuna's sons retaliated by killing Jamadagni in his absence. Then Rama slaughtered the sons of Kartavirya and in a fit of rage, destroyed all the kshatriyas three times

1. However, there is a simple explanation according to the science of inheritance. Bhargava Rama became a great warrior, as he had inherited the Kshatriya genes from his mother and grandmother, who were both Kshatriya women.

seven, filling five pools with their blood. Standing in the middle of these pools of blood, Rama made offerings to the manes, until the shades of his ancestors appeared and stopped him. Then Rama performed a great sacrifice, in which he gifted the earth to sage Kashyapa and retired to Mount Mahendra. (MGG. pp. 25, 26)

While Suta has incorporated the Bhargava legends to explain the importance of the places of pilgrimages visited by the Bhargavas during their exile, Sauti has added many legends, which if at all, are remotely connected with the Mbh. events or characters. Sauti, in fact, starts with the most illustrious family of the Bhrigus, which, he says, is respected even by the celestials such as Indra, Agni and Maruts (I. 5.5). As stated earlier when Sauti Ugrashravas met Kulapati Shaunaka at the sacrificial session held by the sage in the Naimisha forest, he was specifically asked to relate the history of the Bhargavas. Accordingly the eight-chapters 5-12 of the Adiparva, which form the Paulomaparva, are entirely devoted to an account of one branch of the Bhrigu clan. Here we learn how Bhrigu, the eponymous ancestor of the clan, cursed Agni, who had disclosed the identity of his wife Pulomaa to Asura Puloma, who was earlier betrothed to her and wanted to carry her off. As a result of this curse, Agni became sarvabhakshaka, eater of all things (I. 6.13). Then follows the story of Ruru, which forms a prelude to Astikaparva; from Chyavan, son of Bhrigu, one branch ran as follows : Chyavana-Pramati-Ruru-Shunaka. In the Anushasana, however, we get a different genealogy of Ruru. Therein we are told how Pratardana, son of Divodasa, defeated Vitahavya and went in pursuit of him. When Vitahavya took shelter in Bhrigu's hermitage. Bhrigu told Pratardana that only brahmins were in the hermitage and so by his mere word Vitahavya became a brahmin. His son was Gritsamada, who according to the tradition, was the author of the second Mandala of Rigveda. The eleventh descendant of Gritsamada was Pramati, the father of Ruru, whose son and grandson were Shunaka and Shaunaka.

In the Sabha, the Bharagavas are briefly mentioned by Sauti on many occasions. Some of the Bhargavas, such as Bhrigu, Jamadagni, Rama are said to be present in the halls of Indra, Varuna etc.; as also in the hall of Yudhishthira. When Krishna told Yudhishthira about the prerequisites of the Rajasuya sacrifice, he pointed out quite irrelevantly that the kshatriyas of his times were inferior to these who were exterminated by Bhargava Rama ( II. B.2 ).

In the Aranyaka we meet an important Bhargava sage Markandeya who gave the Pandavas discourses on most diverse topics. Here Sauti had added the adhyayas 179-183 and Angiras in which he describes the glory of brahmins, the merit of giving gifts to them and the birth of Kartikeya. The stories of Manu, Yayati, Vrishadarbha, Indradyumna, Kuvalashva and of Dharmavyadha and the Ramopakhyana have been added subsequently by Harivamshakara. Markandeya turns up again towards the end of their exile and consoles Yudhishthira by relating to him the legend of Savitri and Satyavan, the immortal story of a wife's devotion to her husband. Although we do not know how Markandeya was related to the family of Bhrigus, he is frequently addressed as Bhrigunandana ( 196.4 ), Bhrigu-kulashreshtha ( 196.13 ) etc.

In the Udyogaparva, we find that Bhargava Rama came into direct contact with the epic characters, especially Bhishma with whom he crossed swords. Rama, leading a team of ancient sages, met Krishna on his way to Hastinapura and told him that they too were going to watch the proceedings of his mission. After Krishna addressed the assembly, Rama got up and related the story of Dambodbhava ( V. 94 ); the foolish king had the temerity to challenge the sages Nara and Narayana to fight with him. The sages declined but when the king persisted, Nara took a handful of grass-blades and charging them with mystic power, flung them at the king. The blades, turned into deadly weapons, routed the army of the king, who acknowledged his defeat and surrendered to them. Bhargava Rama pointed out that it was

futile to fight with Nara and Narayana, who had now appeared as Arjuna and Krishna and advised conciliation. As Sukthankar has pointed out, this story in which Bhargava Rama appears in the uncharacteristic role of a peace-maker, is an 'unnecessary digression' and its sole object is to emphasize the identity between Nara-Narayana and Arjuna-Krishna.'

Sauti has further added the Ambopakhyana ( adhyayas 174-187 ), which tells us that just at the time when Amba sought refuge in the hermitage, there came by chance the royal sage Hotravahana. After knowing the plight of Amba whom he recognised as his grand-daughter, he advised her to seek the help of his friend Bhargava Rama. While deliberations were going on as how best to proceed in the matter, there arrived by another happy chance, Rama's attendant Akritavarna. After hearing the previous history of Amba from Hotravahana, Akritavarna agreed that Bhishma was responsible for Amba's predicament and deserved punishment. Again by another happy chance on the following morning after knowing the misfortunes of Amba, Bhargava Rama also felt pity for her plight and sent a word to Bhishma to choose between accepting her as his wife or a duel with him. Bhishma said that he could not marry her because of his vow and chose the latter course. The titanic conflict between the two lasted for twenty-three days without any prospect of its termination by either scoring a decisive victory over the other. Neither was prepared to yield, even when the gods tried to intervene and finally stood between them to make the fight impossible. Ultimately the shades of Rama's ancestors persuaded Rama to lay aside his weapons, which he reluctantly did. Bhishma then put down his bow and arrow and fell prostrate at the feet of his guru. This episode may strike one as unbelievable because of two things. Firstly one may accept as probable the arrival of the royal sage Hotravahana at the time Amba had taken shelter at the hermitage. That Akritavarna should come there at about the same time and turn out to be an attendant of Bhargava Rama,

whose help was proposed to be sought may be taken as possible, if not probable. But that Bhargava Rama should also turn up there the following day is well-nigh impossible. Secondly, the uncharacteristic behaviour of Rama, who has been represented as an implacable foe of the kshatriyas also makes the story incredible. Here he was shown to have befriended a royal sage Hotravahana, taken a kshatriya prince as his pupil and championed the cause of a kshatriya princess.

Leaving the minor references to the Bhargavas in the parvas that follow, we come to Shanti, where we get another repetition of the legend of Bhargava Rama's heroic exploits. After the Pandava's set out with Krishna to visit Bhishma on his death-bed at Kurukshetra, the party arrived at the very spot where Rama had established two lakes of kshatriya blood ( XII. 48.9 ). Although Yudhishtira had heard the story of Rama before ( III. 115-117 ), he expressed a desire to hear it again ( XII. 48.10 ). Krishna obliged him and repeated the whole story of Bhargava Rama, the extirpation of the kshatriyas and the subsequent regeneration of the kshatriya race.

This story of Bhargava Rama as related by Krishna differs from the one told by Akritavarma to the Pandavas in the Aranyaka on three material points. Firstly it is Richika, Satyavati's husband, who grants the boon of a son to his wife and her mother, thus corroborating the story as told by Suta in the legend of Kartavirya. Secondly Arjuna Kartavirya is represented here as a gentle king devoted to the cause of peace and the whole blame of carring off the calf of the wish-cow is laid at the door of his proud and cruel sons. Yudhishtira had expressed a doubt as to how the earth come to be repeopled by kshatriyas after the kshatriya race had been wiped out thrice seven times by Bhargava Rama. Krishna's explanation was that the earth had concealed some kshatriyas ( 49.66 ). When Rama had given away the earth as a sacrificial gift to Kashyapa, the latter had asked him to leave his dominion and settle down elsewhere. Then the earth, oppressed by the anarchy in the

absence of the virtuous kshatriyas sought the protection of Kashyapa and told him that she had concealed some foremost kshatriyas among women. Kashyapa then is said to have restored by and by these survivors of the old kshatriya families to their rightful heritage. Thus Krishna concluded by saying that the present Kshatriyas were the progeny of the old Kshatriya kings ( Shanti, 49-79 ). This is, however, contrary to the version of Akritavarna, who had clearly stated that the present kshatriyas were procreated by pious brahmins from the widows of kshatriyas slaughtered by Bhargava Rama. It is obvious that the later version has been included by Sauti at the instance of his patron king Prasenjit, who did not like the procreation of the kshatriya race by pious brahmins.

While speaking of the unmistakable Bhargava influence on the later redactions of the epics, Dr. Sukthankar observes that 'the Anushasanaparva, for some reason that is not clear, is the richest in Bhargava material.' The reason is obvious : out of 154 adhyayas of the Anushasana, only 38 adhyayas belonged to the Vaishampayana text. Sauti has contributed as many as 110 adhyayas, so that he had full scope for including as many Bhargava legends as he could think of. Of the Bhargava episodes which find a place in the Anushasana, the story of Vishvamitra and the episode of the birth of Jamadagni ( 3, 4 ) seem to belong to the Vaishampayana text. In any case there is no statistical evidence to show that they were added later, though this is not improbable.

Among the additions made by Sauti, we have the story of king Vitahavya, who became a brahmin by the mere word of Bhrigu ( XII.31 ). Only a scion of the Bhrigu race by name Vipula could guard the chastity of his teacher's wife against the frailty of women and the guiles of Indra. The mixed parentage of Bhargava Rama, which is a topic of perennial interest to the redactor, occurs twice in the legend of Chyavana ( XIII.50-56 ). In this story, Chyavana, forestalling the birth of Bhargava Rama with kshatriya qualities among his descendants, took the

unusual course of testing the hospitality of king Kushika and his wife, the grand-parents of Vishvamitra, with the intention of cursing them if they were found wanting. Again we are told that the practice of using umbrellas and sandals for protection against the scorching heat of the sun owed its origin to Jamadagni ( 97 ). Then comes the story of Nahusha ( 102, 103 ), in which Nahusha is transformed into a serpent as a result of Bhrigu's curse. It may be recalled that in this story Nahusha was changed into a serpent as a result of Agastya's curse. This would indicate a distinct tendency on the part of Sauti to what Dr. Sukthankar calls 'Bhriguisatration of an ancient legend. '.

The last Bhargava episode added by Sauti is the legend of Uttanka in the Ashvamedhika Parva ( 52-57 ). In this legend we are told that after the death of Bhishma, Krishna bade farewell to the Pandavas and proceeded to Dvaraka. On the way he met the illustrious Bhargava sage Uttanka, who not having heard about the war enquired how the Kauravas and the Pandavas were faring. When he came to know that many of the warriors on both sides had perished in the great war, he reproached Krishna for not preventing the war and wanted to curse him. Krishna told him that he had tried both persuasion and deterrence to dissuade Duryodhana from starting the war, but the latter, being arrogant and drunk with power, would not listen to reason or intimidation. As this did not carry conviction to Uttanka, Krishna somehow pacified him by showing him his cosmic form ( Vishvarupa ).

According to Dr. Sukthankar, a striking feature of the Bhargava legends is their frequent repetition on different occasions in the course of the epic, Bhrigu is said to have had a divine descent and is almost regarded as a semi-devine being. For although he is not included among the six mind-born sons of the creator, he is said to be his son, as he came out after cleaving his breast ( I-60 ). In describing his vibhutis in the Gita ( x ), Lord Krishna said that he was Bhrigu among the great

sages and also Shukra, the Asura priest and Bhrigu's grandson, among wise men. He declared himself to be Raama among the weapon-bearers and according to Dr. Sukthankar, ' this Rama is no other than the much-lauded hero of the Mahabharata poets, Rama, the son, of Jamadagni, the Bhargava Rama '.

Dr. Sukthankar further observes that the space and breadth of treatment given to the Bhargava legends is out of all proportion to that accorded to the legends of other equally renowned sages. The legends in respect of Agastya, Atri, Kanya, Kashyapa, Gautama and Vasishtha have also been given, but they are hardly ever-repeated. The Bhargava legends, on the other hand, are not only repeated, but the Bhargava hero Rama has been so glorified as to make him as great as the Mbh. heroes Bhism and Krishna. Sauti has no doubt, tried to give verisimilitude to these Bhargava legends by making Bhargava Rama the teacher of Bhishma, Drona and Karna, although he was separated from them by two epochs. After making a through survey of the Bhargava material in the epic Dr. Sukhthankar unhesitatingly came to the conclusion that ' in our version of the Mahabharata, there is a conscious - nay deliberate - weaving together or rather stitching together of the Bharata legends with the Bhargava myths. ' This view of Dr. Sukhthankar is entirely borne out by the statistical studies. As stated earlier, except for the legend of Vishvamitra in the Anushasana, almost all the Bhargava legends have been added by Suta and Sauti, and both of them had apparently come under the strong influence of Bhargava Shaunaka. As we saw before the same Bhargava influences has been responsible for ' the incorporation into the epic of large masses of didactic material concentrated chiefly into the Shanti and Anushasana, especially so far as it concerns, the Dharma and Niti elements. '

### Legends of sages

In addition to martial heroes, the epic bards have also

1. Sukthankar, op. cit. p. 332.

given the legends of moral heroes, namely sages who have conquered through austerities the internal enemies such as desire, hatred, greed and self-conceit. There is an anonymous couplet which runs as follows :

There is the brahmanical power,  
There is the kshatriya power;  
The one proceeds from power to curse;  
The other from the power of arrows.

Angiras was a Vedic scholar to whom many hymns in the Rigveda are attributed. Sauti has added the story of Angiras in III.214, where he mentions the name of his wife Shiva and says that through her he had seven sons including Brihaspati, the divine priest and seven daughters. He also mentions ( I-60 ) that Utathya and Sauvrat were his sons. In XII-25 he explains the merits of pilgrimage to Gautama and says that Angiras had undertaken pilgrimages and perambulation of the world. In contrast Bhrigu, is said to have had a divine descent and is almost regarded as one among the six mind-born sons of Prajapati. Suta mentions him as the son of Brihaspati, who had come out after cleaving his breast ( SM-1.60 ). Later in XIII.85 added by Sauti, he and his son Kavi are represented as having been created Prajapatis. The Bhrigus are said to have possessed such mystic powers that they could hold their own and even dare the gods. Bhrigu cursed Agni, who disclosed the identify of his wife to asura Puloma and enabled him to carry her off. As a result of this curse, Agni became sarvabhakshaka, all devourer ( I-16 ). Then comes the story of Nahusha ( I.102, 103 ) in which Nahusha is transformed into a serpent as a result of Bhrigu's curse. It may be recalled that in the story as stated by Suta, Nausha was changed into a serpent as a result of Agastya's curse. This would indicate a tendency on the part of Sauti to what Sukthankar calls Bhriguisation of an ancient legend.

Sauti has included the legends of Agastya, Atri, Kanya, Kashyapa, Gautama, Vasistha and Vishvamitra to demonstrate that the moral force is superior to physical might. Agastya is mentioned in the Rigveda ( VII. 33.13 ) and is said to be the son of Mitravaruna like Vasishtha. Many hymns and mantras are ascribed to him. Atri is mentioned in the first Mandala of Rigveda ( 112.7 ) and he is said to have been imprisoned as he took the side of the common people in opposition to the king. Kanya is repeatedly mentioned as a Vedic seer and composer of Vedic hymns ( IX. 94 ) and his descendants have contributed the eighth Mandala of the Rigveda. Kashyapa was a Vedic seer and was reckoned as one of the seven sages and Prajapatis ( Mbh. XIII.141 ) Gautama, son of Sharadvata, was the husband of Ahalya, who was seduced by Indra. This episode of Indra as the paramour of Ahalya is as old as the Shat. Br. ( III. 3.8 ) and Tai. Br. ( I.12 )<sup>1</sup> They were all Vedic scholars and could not have been contemporaries of the Mbh. heroes including Krishna. Atri is mentioned in the RV. ( I. 112 ) as the author of many Vedic hymns.

The problem of Vasishtha and Vishvamitra is somewhat different. The first Vashishtha was the seer of the first three rics ( vedic hymns ) of the seventh mandala of Rigveda; the rest being contributed by his descendants. In the Rigveda he is said to be the son of Mitravaruna and nymph Urvashi<sup>2</sup> and is known as Maitravaruna. The first Vishvamitra was also a Vedic sage, who was a contemporary of the first Vasishtha and is well-known as the composer of the Gayatri mantra. With the growing importance of Indra after his conquest of the Asuras, Vasishtha switched over to his side and became the priest of Sudas. This was the origin of their feud which finds a mention in Rigveda ( III. 33 ). After that Vishvamitra joined the ten kings who were the enemies of Sudasa and assisted them in the Dasharajna war. After the death of Sudasa, Vishvamitra became

1. Brihaddevata, VI. 35-39.

2. See Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 55.

the priest of the descendants of Sudasa.

The second great Vasishtha was known as Devaraja Vasishtha who was the famous royal priest of Ayodhya in the days of Trayyaruna Satyavrata and Harishchandra. Satyavrata was a just and virtuous king, but he was inordinately fond of his body. He requested his royal priest Vasishtha to perform a sacrifice and send him to heaven in his mortal body. When Vasishtha refused, he requested his sons to do so, but they blamed him for his defiant conduct towards their father and cursed him to become a chandala. After the Vedic sage, there was another Vishvamitra, who was a contemporary of Devraja Vasishtha. He was originally Vishvaratha, the son of Gadhi, king of Kanyakubja ( Brahma p. 10.56 ) After he succeeded to the throne, he kept his family in a hermitage and performed austerities for a period of twelve years and came to be acknowledged as a brahmin. Satyavrata had looked after the family of this second Vishvamitra on the occasion of a severe famine and so the latter undertook to perform a sacrifice and invited all the gods to it. When the gods declined to attend the sacrifice, he sent Satyavrata to heaven in exercise of his yogic power. When Satyavrata was hurled down head-foremost by Indra, Vishvamitra arrested him in his downward course and threatened to create a new heaven for him. The gods intervened and he withdrew his threat on condition that Satyavrata should remain in the firmament. Since then Satyavrata has remained suspended with his head pointing towards the earth as a constellation in the southern hemisphere and become famous as Trishanku. Most probably the legends in the Balakanda of Ramayana of the cow Shabala ( 51.5 ) and Menaka ( 62.3 ), who had been sent by Indra to obstruct his penance are connected with him. These stories, which are purely fictitious seem to be based on this second Vishvamitra.

There is, however, no mention of Shakuntala in the Balakanda account of Menaka in the Ramayana added by Suta.

The episode of Shakuntala has been added by Sauti in the Mbh. It is extremely doubtful whether this Vishvamitra was the father of Shakuntala, as her foster father belonged to the Vedic period, while her husband Dushyanta and her son Bharata belonged to a later period. The Vishvamitra episode ( R. 1.31 ) has no relevance to the main story of Raama. However, this story exhibits the same style of Suta and there is no reson to believe that it accreted in stages as stated by Brockington ( p. 57 ). Suta seems to have added this episode to show how Rama received the divine weapons and the instruction in their use from Vishvamitra and how he later took Rama and Lakshmana to Mithila, where Rama won the hand of Sita. There was no Vishvamitra worth the name, who was a contemporary of Dashratha and Rama and the episode seems to have been based on the story of Vishvamitra, who was a contemporary of Davaraja Vasishtha.

The third great Vasishtha, known as Apava Atharvanidhi, was the priest of Bahu, who was an ancient king of the solar race, eighth in succession to Harishchandra and father of Sagara. The fourth Vasishtha was the priest of king Sudasa, father of Ashmaka. King Sudasa beguiled by a rakshasa offered human flesh as food to a brahmin and was cursed by him. As a result of this curse, the king was turned into a cannibal and killed and devoured a brahmin. After twelve years he regained his sanity and at his request Vasishtha begot a son Ashmaka in Madayanti, his queen ( Pargiter, p.207 ). The fifth Vasishtha was the royal priest of Dilipa II, Khatvanga and is said to have been his instructor. He is described in the first three cantos of the Raghuvaansha, where Kalidasa gives him the epithet Atharvanidhi. Pargiter names him Atharvanidhi II to distinguish him from the third Vasishtha. The sixth Vasishtha was the royal priest of Dasharatha and Rama. Dasharatha decided in consultation with him to install Rama as his successor. Later after Dasharatha's death he sent for Bharata who had gone to his maternal uncle and summoned the council

to appoint him as his successor. When he refused, Vasishtha went with him to persuade Rama to return to Ayodhya. There he was not able to meet the moral issue raised by Rama as to how he could break his father's promise to Kaikeyi. He merely harped on the traditional obedience due to his guru, who was in the position of a father to him. It is evident that Suta has telescoped in the epic the legends connected with the Vasishthas, who lived in different periods.

Some of the western scholars and Siddhanta seem to think that some of the stories have been included later to affirm the superiority of the brahmins over the kshatriyas and cite the quarrel between Vasishtha and Vishvamitra as an instance. It would be true to say that such stories are intended to demonstrate the superiority of moral law and the penalty one has to pay for its transgression. The quarrel between Vasishtha and Vishvamitra arose because of the cupidity of the latter in desiring to possess the divine cow of Vasishtha, which resulted in his discomfiture. Finding that his arts of war failed against the sage, he wanted to become a brahmin and performed austerities until he succeeded in becoming one.<sup>1</sup> Some legends show that the celestials too have the same human foibles and have to suffer their consequences. When Vishvamitra was taking Rama and Laxmana to Mithila to attend the svayamvara of Sita, daughter of king Janaka, they went through Vishala where Ahalya lay turned into a stone by the curse of her husband, Gautama. She had incurred this curse, as she had succumbed to the seduction of Indra. Gautama had also cursed Indra that he would have a thousand marks on his body, which were later changed into thousand eyes and Indra came to be known as thousand-eyed (sahasrakshya). At the suggestion of Vishvamitra, Rama touched the stone with his foot and released Ahalya from her curse.

Harivamshakara has given (III.190-191) the story of king

Shala, son of Parikshit of Ikshvaku race. Aayu was a king of the Manduka tribe and his daughter Sushobhana was married to Parikshit. She gave birth to three sons, Shala, Dala and Bala. Shala became the king after Parikshit. When once he had gone to the forest for hunting, the horses of his chariot became tired and stopped working. Shala went to the hermitage of sage Vamadeva and requested him to spare his two horses. The sage granted his request on the condition that he would return the horses when they were no longer needed by him. The king not only did not return the horses, but claimed that they belonged to him. The sage became so enraged that he created four devils by his yogic power and got him killed by them. After Shala Dala became the king of Ayodhya. Thus too much greed which results in the misappropriation of another's property brings about dire consequences.

Harivamshakara has included in the same parva (186-187) two legends about the dissolution and recreation of the universe, mainly the legend of the fish and the twin child. According to the first legend, Manu, the son of Vivasvat, was saying his usual prayers on the bank of a river, when he saw a very tiny fish. As the fish sought his protection, he kept it in a small earthen vessel filled with water. When it began to grow bigger and bigger, he transferred it successively to a tank, the river Ganga and then the ocean. Before parting from Manu, the fish warned him of the impeding deluge and advised him to build an ark and stock seeds of all kinds in it. When the deluge came, Manu got into the ark with the seven sages. When the flood subsided, the fish said to Manu and the seven sages, "I am the Lord of the creatures, Brahman and there is none greater than me. You have been saved from a great peril by me assuming the form of the fish. Manu will now create all beings, the gods, the asuras, the human beings and all things which move and do not move." Manu, like his semitic counterpart, Noha, had no problem in recreating the world with the seeds which had been carefully preserved in the ark. Sukthankar (p.45), following Winternitz, considers this story of Semitic

1. added by Sauti.

origin, as it does not at all fit in the Mbh. cycle. There is, however, a legend in the Shata. Br. ( I. 8.1.1 ) which says that Manu was saved by a fish during the deluge, but says nothing about the deluge and the recreation of the universe.

Both Suta and Sauti have incorporated myths and legends in the epic to illustrate how the practice of dharama and niti confers superior powers on the practitioner and how its neglect leads to perdition and ruin. Sauti gives the beautiful story of Kacha and Devayani in Adi ( 72-73 ) to extol the merit of studenthood ( bramhacharya ). In the past there were fierce battles between the gods and asuras for the sovereignty of the world. Brihaspati was the priest of the gods and Shukra of the asuras. Now the asuras had an advantage over the gods in that their priest Shukra knew the sanjivani mantra, a secret charm by which he could revive the dead, so that he could bring the dead asura warriors back to life. Indra, therefore, sent Kacha, son of Brihaspati, the divine priest to the asura priest Shukra to learn this sanjivani mantra, which would enable the gods to fight with the asuras on equal terms. Kacha was accepted by Shukra as his disciple and was pleased with his behaviour. The asuras did not like this and so when they saw him in the fields tending his preceptor's kine, they killed him and gave his body to the wolves. When Devayani missed Kacha and told her father that she could not live without him, Shukra with his charm revived Kacha. The asuras killed him a second time and he was again revived by Shukra. The third time, they burnt his body and mixing his ashes in wine, they gave the wine to Shukra to drink. When this time Shukra called him, Kacha replied from within his stomach. When Shukra found that Kacha's coming out after revival would mean his certain death, he taught him the Sanjivani vidya so that he could revive him when he came out and this Kacha did. Kacha had observed perfect brahmacharya during his stay with his guru. When the period of discipleship was over, he wanted to return home. When Devayani confessed her love for him and asked him to marry her, he declined to do so and returned to the heaven with his newly acquired knowledge.

Suta has recorded in the Aranyaka the story of Rishyashringa who by the practice of bramhacharya brought rain and saved the country of Anga from severe famine Vibhandaka, a great sage, lived with his son Rishyashringa in a forest. The latter had not met any mortal except his father. When the country of Anga once suffered from a severe famine, its king Romapada sought the advice of his priestly counsellors of some means of saving the country. They told him of the young sage Rishyashringa who had lived a life of chastity and had acquired the power to bring rain and plenty wherever he lived. After consulting his courtiers, the king sent for the most charming courtesans of the city and entrusted to them the mission of bringing Rishyashringa to Anga. The leader of the band of courtesans turned a boat into a beautiful arbor with an artificial ashrama at the centre. After mooring the boat in the river near the sage's hermitage, they visited the hermitage with throbbing hearts. Luckily for them the sage was not at the hermitage. Thinking that this was an opportune moment, one of the beautiful damsels went to see the sage's son. Rishyashring was wonder-struck by the beautiful form of the visitor and thought her to be a young sage like himself. He enquired as to who he was, where his hermitage was and what kind of religious practices he followed. After he rendered her the customary offerings, she gave him sweets, decorated him with sweet smelling garlands and served him sweet drinks. She then embraced him warmly saying that this was the customary way of greeting an honoured friend. When Vibhandaka returned, he was shocked to see eatables scattered all over the hermitage. When the son told him who had come, Vibhandka guessed what had happened and warned his son that their visitor was not a bramhachari, but a malignant devil, who had come to disrupt their penance.

The courtesans came again during the absence of the sage. Rishyashringa was very eager to accompany them to their hermitage. When he reached the king's palace, Romapada received him with great joy and took him to a luxurious

apartment specially prepared for him. As foretold by the king's priests, rain came as soon as Rishyashringa set his foot in the country, rivers and brooks became full and the people rejoiced. Ramapada gave his daughter Shanta in marriage to Rishyashringa. Though the king's plan had succeeded so far, he was still afraid that Vibhandaka might come to Anga in search of his son and pronounce a curse upon him. He, therefore, lined the route he would take with cattle and instructed the cowherds in charge to tell the sage that they were servants of Rishyashringa who had come there to welcome him. When Vibhandaka arrived at the capital, he was received with great honour. When the sage went to the king's palace, he saw his son sitting in state like a prince and saw by his side his pretty wife Shanta. He was soothed and pleased and blessed the king and the couple.

Suta has added the legend of Yavakrita<sup>1</sup> to demonstrate that one cannot become a Vedic sage by any other method such as penance but by going only to a Vedic teacher and learning it from him through the observance of continence or bramacharya. Yavakrita was the only son of Bharadvaja, who performed penance to attain Vedic knowledge. They were not respected by the brahmins as they were not capable of composing hymns. Indra warned Yavakrita and told him to acquire Vedic knowledge in the regular way through a teacher, but he paid no heed to it. Then Indra took the form of an old brahmin and went on the bank of the river Bhagirathi and started throwing a handful of sand in the river. When Yavakrita asked him what he was doing, he said that he was trying to build a dam in the river. Yavakrit made fun of him by saying that it was a crazy idea and asked him not to spend his energy in a fruitless task. The brahmin replied that it was not as crazy as his attempt to acquire Vedic knowledge through austerities. Yavakrita recognised Indra and begged him to make him and

1. SM. III. 130-140.

his father the greatest among all the sages. Yavakrita then went to his father and told him about the grant of the boon of Indra. His father advised him not to entertain vanity about his knowledge, as it would lead to grave consequences.

The neighbour of Yavakrita was sage Raibhya, who lived there with his sons Arvavasu and Paravasu. Once Yavakrita happened to wander round the ashrama of Raibhya and saw his beautiful daughter-in-law, wife of Paravasu. He became so enamoured of her that he lost all sense of right and wrong and raped her. When Raibhya came to know of it, he became so incensed that he took out two of his matted hairs and offering them into the fire created a beautiful ogress and fiend and asked them to destroy Yavakrita. After the ogress charmed Yavakrita and destroyed his Yogic power, the fiend killed him. When Raibhya returned, he found the sacrificial fire not burning and came to know from the watchman the cause of his death. He cursed Bharadwaja that he would also die at the hands of his son and committed suicide. As result of his curse, Raibhya was killed by Paravasu by mistake. But his virtuous son Arvavasu performed severe austerities and propitiated the sun-god and revived Bharadwaja, Ribhya and Yavakrita and sought two boons from the sun-god. By one, he did not want his father to remember his death at the hands of his son Paravasu and by the second, the sun-hymn which throws light on the Vedas, should remain intact in his family to be handed down in regular succession.

In the Udyogaparva ( 104-106 ), Suta has added the story of Galava, a disciple of Vishvamitra, who pressed his teacher to accept a parting gift and came to grief. After Galava finished his education, he requested his teacher to ask for a gift and pressed him so much that he became angry and asked for eight hundred horses with black ears; such a horse is considered suitable for a horse-sacrifice ( ashvamedha ). He, therefore, went to seek the help of Yayati, celebrated king of the lunar

race, son of Nahusha. The king did not have the horses but had a beautiful daughter Madhavi. Madhavi had received a boon from a brahmin sage that she would retain her youth and maidenhood even after producing children. He gave Galava Madhavi and told him to offer her in marriage and get in exchange the horses needed. Galava took her to Haryashva, a king of the Ishvaku dynasty and requested for eight hundred horses with black ears in exchange for the maiden. As the king was enamoured of Madhavi, he agreed to receive her as his wife, as he had no issue. But he had only two hundred horses which he gave to Galava and agreed to return Madhavi to him thereafter. Madhavi gave birth to a son, Vasumanas, who became king of Ayodhya later. He then took her to Divodasa, king of Kashi and offered her to him on the same terms and took two hundred horses from him. In course of time Madhavi gave birth to a son, Pratardana. He then took her to Ushinara, king of Bhoja and gave him Madhavi on the same terms. She gave birth to a son named Shibi. While he was taking her to another king, Garuda met him on the way and advised him to offer her to Vishvamitra on the same terms. Madhavi gave birth to a son called Astika and after his birth, Vishvamitra returned Madhavi to her father Yayati and went to practice penance.

Sauti has added the legend of Ashtavakra to show how modesty brings in rich rewards and vanity leads to downfall. Uddalaka was a great sage and teacher of Vedanta, who had a disciple named Kahola, who was not much learned but was virtuous and devoted to his teacher. His other disciples used to make fun of Kahola for his lack of learning, but Uddalaka appreciated his virtues and good conduct and gave his daughter Sugaja in marriage to him. The couple was blessed with a son, who fortunately took after his grandfather and came to know the Vedas even in the womb. Whenever Kahola made mistakes, he used to writhe in his body and so when he was born he had eight crooks in his body, because of which he came to be known as Ashtavakra. One ill-fated day Uddalaka provoked a

polemical debate with Bandi, the court scholar of Mithila and being defeated by him had to drown himself. Ashtavakra grew to be a towering scholar even at the age of twelve, as he had already completed his study of the Vedas and Vedangas. One day Ashtavakra came to know that king Janaka of Mithila was performing a great sacrifice and had fixed a symposium of scholars to debate on the shastras. Ashtavakra set out for Mithila accompanied by his uncle Shvetaketu. On the way to the place of sacrifice, they came across the king and his retinue. The attendants were shouting and asking the passersby to make way for the king. Ashtavakra told them that perhaps they were not aware that even a righteous king had to make way for the blind, the deformed, the fair sex, persons bearing loads and brahmins learned in the Vedas. The king, who heard him, was surprised at the words of the boy and made way for him. When Ashtavakra and his uncle tried to enter the sacrificial hall, the gate-keeper stopped them and said that boys were not allowed to go in. Ashtavakra tried to argue with him that gray hair did not prove either learning or the ripeness of the soul and that he should tell the king that he, Ashtavakra, had come to meet Bandi in debate. At that time the king himself happened to pass by and recognising Ashtavakra, allowed the latter to enter. In the debate that took place, Ashtavakra vanquished Bandi, who had to pay the penalty of throwing himself into the ocean. Kahola was full of joy and peace at the glory of his son. Then Kahola asked his son to take a dip in the Samango river and when he did this, his body became straight.

Thereafter, Ashtavakra became engaged to Suprabha, daughter of sage Vadanya. The sage, however, made a condition that he should visit before marriage his friend, an old female ascetic, who was practising penance on a cliff of the Himalayas. When he went to see the ascetic, he was astounded to see that she was living in a grand style surrounded by beautiful girls as her companions. He asked them to go away and stayed with the old ascetic. One night she came to him assuming the form of a beautiful maiden and told him that she

was unmarried and that she would like him to accept her hand in wedlock. He then told her that he could not do so as he was already engaged. The old ascetic then told him that she was testing him as requested by sage Vedangya and found him a suitable match for his daughter. Ashtavakra then married Suprabha and became reknowned as a great Vedic scholar ( Mbh. XIII. 50-52, Sauti ).

The last story added by Sauti is that of the illustrious Bhargava sage Uttanka in the Ashvamedhika ( 52-57 ). There we are told that after the end of the war, Krishna had farewell to the Pandavas and proceeded to Dvaraka. On the way he met the sage Uttanka who had not heard of the war and enquired of him how the Kauravas and Pandavas were faring. When he came to know that many of the warriors on both sides had perished in the great war, he reproached Krishna for not preventing it and wanted to curse him. Krishna told him that he had tried both persuasion and deterrence to dissuade Duryodhana from starting the war, but that the latter was arrogant and drunk with power and so would not listen to reason or intimidation. But this did not carry conviction with him and so Lord Krishna had to show him his cosmic form ( vishvarupa ) to pacify him:

### Legends of Chaste Women

The story of Gautama, son of Sharadvata, husband of Ahalya and the legend of her seduction by Indra in the guise of her husband is as old as Shat. Br. ( III.8 ) and the Tai. Br. ( I.12 ). According to the Ramayana she was the first woman created by Brahma, who gave her to Gautama. She was seduced by Indra who assumed the form of her husband and so deceived her. According to another version she knew the god and was flattered by the great god's condescension and was a willing party to the seduction. There is still another version which states that Indra secured the assistance of the moon, who assumed the form of a crow and crowed at midnight. On this

Gautama got up and left the ashrama to perform his morning prayers and Indra went in and took his place. When Gautama came to know of her seduction, he expelled her from his ashrama and cursed her to remain as a stone, until Dasharathi Rama touched her by his foot and restored her to the former shape. After Rama delivered her from the wretched state, she was reconciled to her husband. The first story that Indra seduced her by adopting the form of her husband seems to be the true story, as Ahalya is considered as one of the five chaste and pure women, whose name is recommended for repetition in the morning.<sup>1</sup>

In XII.25, Sauti gives the story of Chirakarika, who did everything slowly after giving it proper thought. When sage Gautama came to know the infidelity of his wife, he asked his son to kill his mother. Chirakarika was not in the habit of acting without examining the pros and cons of the action to be performed and so started brooding over what to do. When sage Gautama came home, he saw his son preparing to carry out his command. When Chirakarika saw his father and laid down his weapon, the latter was relieved to see that he had not carried out his instruction and withdrew his command.

In the Aranyaka ( SM. 94-99 ), Suta gives the beautiful legend of sage Agastya and princess Lopamudra. Agastya is mentioned in the Rigveda ( I.179 ) as a Vedic seer and Brihaddevata ( 4.57 ) tells us that Lopamudra was his wife. sage Agastya had taken the vow of celibacy and was leading an austere saintly life as a hermit. Once he saw his ancestral spirits with their heads hanging down, and asked them why they were so depressed. They told him that as the only surviving member of the family he should break his vow, beget a son and save them from falling into hell. As the sage could not find a suitable maiden to forsake pleasure for his sake, he created a lovely

1. Ahalya. Draupadi. Sita. Tara. Mandodari tathu panchakanyah smaren nityam  
Apte's Dictionary. ROG. p. 211

maiden by taking the best qualities from all beings and gave her to Bhima, king of Vidarbha, who was praying for a child. The child was named Lopamudra; and when she grew up her beauty was peerless and she was gifted with unusual intelligence and virtue. When her parents were trying to find a suitable match for her, sage Agastya saw the king and claimed her hand. The parents were unhappy with his suit, but dared not refuse the sage. When Lopamudra came to know the cause of their anguish, she willingly agreed to marry the sage. Agastya told his wife to discard her precious clothes and ornaments and dress herself as befitted her new status, which she did.

The couple spent their days happily in the hermitage, Lopamudra not only performed her household duties well, but she also joined her husband in the worship of the sacred fire and meditation. When they had spent some time in penance and meditation, a strong and abiding love sprang between them. When the sage expressed a desire to have a son, she coyly told him that she would like a royal bed, beautiful garments and costly jewels as she used to have in her father's place and that he should also wear elegant robes and ornaments. She told him that he could have these things through his yogic powers. He, however, did not wish to do so and approached three kings in the hope of getting gifts from them. When they showed their accounts which did not show any budget surplus, he did not think it proper to press them for gifts. He then went to Asura Ilvala, who was known to be fabulously rich. Now this Asura used to feed his guest with goat's meat from the body of his brother Vätapi transformed into a goat and then asked him to come out. When he did so, his brother did not come out and Agastya told him that he lay in his stomach properly digested. Then the Asura became frightened and after bowing to the sage asked for his forgiveness. Agastya reassured him and received substantial riches to meet his wife's wishes. After the sage had made all the arrangements as desired by his wife, he asked her whether she would like to have ten sons or one gifted son; she expressed a desire to have a learned and virtuous son and then

their perfect union gave birth to a son, the great poet 'Dridhasyu' (SM. III.93-109).

Sauti (III. 43) has given the story of princess Jaratkaru, who married an old irascible sage of her namesake to save her own race. The king Parikshit was very fond of hunting and once when he chased a stag in the forest on foot, he lost its trace. He saw sage Shaunaka, who was drinking foam falling from the mouth of calves as they sucked the cows' milk and asked the sage which way the stag had gone. But as the sage was observing the vow of silence, he did not answer the king. The king became so angry that he picked up a dying snake lying near and picking it up with the end of his arrow, he coiled it round the neck of the sage. The sage did not take notice of it and forgave the king. But his son Shringi was so enraged that he cursed the king that he would die of snake-bite within a week. This actually happened and king Parikshit died of snake-bite by naga Takshaka. When Janamejaya ascended the throne of Hastinapura and came to know the death of his father through a snake-bite by a naga, he decided to avenge it and made preparation for a sacrifice to burn all the nagas in the world in it. When Vasuki, the king of nagas, heard about it, he was very much perturbed. Then an old naga told him that he had heard that if his princess Jaratkaru would marry a great sage of that name; his son would save the race of the nagas. Sauti has given in the Aranyaka 43, the story of princess Jaratkaru, who married an old irascible sage of her namesake to save her race.

The king was pleased to hear the advice of the old naga and commanded some nagas to shadow sage Jaratkaru and find out if he expressed a desire to get married. Jaratkaru was a wandering mendicant, who had taken the vow of poverty and celibacy. He had also a quick temper and cared for nothing in this world. In the meantime, sage Jaratkaru was told by the shades of his ancestors that as he was the sole surviving member of the family, he must get married and beget a son to

save them from hell. He agreed on the condition that the bride should bear his name and did not depend upon him for her maintenance. When Vasuki requested sage Jaratkaru to marry his sister, he made one condition that he should be free to leave, if she did something disagreeable to him. After marriage princess Jaratkaru accustomed herself to her new life and did her best to please her husband in every way. But one day the sage looked very tired and slept placing his head in her lap. When the sun was about to set, she woke him up so that he could offer his evening prayer in time. But the sage became furious and said, "you have dared to wake me up from my sleep, I shall immediately leave you." In vain did she try to placate him by saying that she woke him so that he should offer his evening prayer in time. She pleaded with him that he should not leave her before giving her a son. He replied that she was already carrying a baby of his, who would become a Vedic seer and save her race. She gave birth to Astika, whom she brought up to love her people and to revere his father and follow in his footsteps. When Janamejaya started his snake-sacrifice, it was sage Astika who went there and persuaded Janamejaya to stop the carnage of the nagas.

The wife of a householder plays an important role not only as a wife but also as a mother. She brings up the children and also gives them proper advice when the need arises. Sauti has added the Vidura-putranushasana in Udyoga 131-138 to illustrate this. Viduraa was the queen of the Sauvira country and she had a son named Sanjaya. As her husband had died when Sanjaya was still young, the Sindhu king Naresha invaded his country and wrested the kingdom from him. When Vidura came to know of his defeat, she chided him for his lack of valour and courage and encouraged him to mobilise his army and give a hard fight to king Naresha and recover his kingdom which he did. When Krishna went to Hastinapur to make a final appeal to the Kauravas on peace mission, he called upon Kunti and asked her if she had a message to give to her sons. She narrated this story to him and asked him to tell Yudhishtira on

her behalf to fight with the Kauravas with all his might and win back his kingdom. This story has become famous not only because of the spirited advice of Viduraa to her son, but also because it contains sound counsel coached in aphorisms, which run as follows : (i) it is better to sparkle for a moment than give out smoke for long; (ii) contentment comes in the way of progress and prosperity and (iii) one should bow down his head before elders and sages but hold it high and show manliness.

Ashvapati, king of Madras, did not have a child until he was fairly advanced in age. Then he had a daughter through the grace of goddess Savitri and so he named her Savitri after the goddess. She grew up to be such a calm and dignified maiden that no young prince of her time came to woo her and ask for her hand. Ashvapati then advised her to choose a husband of her choice. She went along with some of the king's councillors and visited the hermitages of royal sages. On return she told her father that she had chosen Satyavan, son of Dyumatsena, the former ruler of Shalva who had lost his kingdom after he became blind. Narada, who was present then, said that though Satyavan was endowed with all noble qualities, he was to die after the end of a year and tried to dissuade her from marrying him. As Savitri was firm in her decision, Ashvapati went to Dyumatsen's hermitage and made the necessary arrangements for her marriage. When the day for her husband's death drew near, she observed the triratra vow of fasting for three nights. Then on the day when the year was complete, she sought the permission of her father-in-law to go with her husband to the forest. They had not gone very far when Satyavan complained of bad headache and lay down resting his head on his wife's lap. Soon Yama, god of death, appeared and said that he had come to take away her husband and took out from Satyavan's body a tiny person of the measure of a thumb, and after binding it with a noose started to go away. Savitri started to follow him in spite of his dissuasions. Yama was so pleased with her entreaties that he granted her several boons, restoration of the

sight and kingdom to her father-in-law and sons to her. When she pointed out that she could not have sons without her husband, Yama promised to spare her husband's life. When she returned to the place where she had left Satyavan, she found that he had got up and both returned to the hermitage.

In the same parva Suta goes on to tell the story of another ideal wife princess Sukanya ( III. 121-123 ). Sukanya, the only daughter of king Sharyati of the Puru race, was endowed with beauty, grace and culture. Once king Sharyati, accompanied by his family, went to the woodland to enjoy sylvan sport. In the same forest sage Cyavana had begun his hard penance and as he was immersed in meditation, he had forgotten the outer world. As years passed by, his body was covered with fallen leaves and he was buried in an ant-hill. As Sukanya was gathering flowers she saw what seemed to her to be two sparkling gems through the holes of an anthill. She took a sharp thorn and pierced them. Instantly Cyavana stood up trembling with blinded eyes before the princess, who was not only frightened but also ashamed of her carelessness and unintended cruelty. Hearing the mishap, the king came there and begged the sage to forgive his innocent daughter. The sage said that she could atone for the harm caused to him by marrying him. Sukanya begged her parents to permit her to marry him. After their marriage, Sukanya lived with her husband in a small cottage, served him lovingly and practised hard penance. She was a loving wife, devoted friend, wise counsellor and humble disciple rolled into one.

One day when she was taking her bath. Ashvins, the divine twins, saw her and were charmed by her beauty. They proposed that she should leave her old husband and marry either of them, but she proudly told them that she was devoted to her husband and would not leave him. Then they disclosed to her who they were and told her that they could restore youth and health to her husband and cure his blindness; but they

stipulated one condition that after this she should choose one of the three as her husband. She consulted her husband, who eagerly consented to it and both went and saw the divine physicians. They asked Cyavana to take a dip in the water and when he did so, they joined him and rejuvenated him. When they came out of water, they looked so much alike that the princess was puzzled as to who could be her husband. But her great love of her husband and chastity enabled her to recognise Cyavana and she threw herself in his arms. Sauti has added a sequel to this in Anushasana.141. Then Cyavana in gratitude requested Indra to give Ashvins a share in the sacrificial offerings. When Indra refused Cyavana paralysed his hand and created a monster mada. Intoxication, who tried to devour the gods. After Indra, importuned by the gods, agreed to Cyavana's request, the latter dissipated the power of Mada by distributing it among hunting, dice, wine and women.

The author of Harivamsha has added the legend of Nala ( HM. III. 50-78 ) to show how love between a couple survives even after facing the vicissitudes of life. Nala, the king of Nishadha, was a handsome prince, well-versed in the science of war and skilled in driving chariots. At that time Bhima, king of Vidarbha, had a daughter Damayanti, who was comely and virtuous. They had come to know each other from heralds who visited their courts and sang their praises. One day, while walking in the garden, Nala saw a flock of golden swans and caught one of them. When the swan begged to be released, he let it go on the condition that it would see Damayanti and communicate his love to her. The flock went to Vidarbha and alighted in the royal garden where the princess was sporting with her friends. The swan, which was released by Nala, led Damayanti to a nook and said to her that Nala had sent his love to her and praising Nala told her that she would be blessed if she could marry him. The princess blushed and asked the swan to go and tell Nala that she reciprocated his love. The swan went to Nala and conveyed to him that Damayanti also loved

him.

In the meantime her father had arranged her svayamvara. All the famous princes hastened to attend the assembly. The gods had also come to learn of the event and Indra, Agni, Yama and Varuna proceeded towards Bhima's capital. On the way they met Nala and persuaded him to act as a messenger for them. But Damayanti would not accept anyone but Nala, and the gods also graciously agreed that she should be allowed to have her choice. But Kali, the deity of strife, became envious of Nala's good fortune and entered into Nala to lead him to misfortune. He induced Nala to play a game of dice with his brother Pushkara, in which he lost all his possessions. Pushkara warned all the citizens not to offer any hospitality to Nala, who now had to roam in the forest with his wife. Nala then told Damayanti to go to her father's place, but she did not want to do so, as she was devoted to her husband. However, when she had fallen asleep, Nala got up and went away leaving her alone in the forest. After meeting with many adventures, she arrived at the capital of the king of chedis, where she was taken to the queen mother, who accepted her services and appointed her as a companion to her daughter Sunanda. In the meantime Bhima had come to know the misfortunes of his son-in-law and sent out messengers to find out the whereabouts of his daughter and son-in-law. One of them saw Damayanti in Sunanda's company and recognised her. The queen-mother happened to be a sister of Damayanti's mother. She made arrangements for Damayanti to return to her father's place. In the wanderings Nala met Karkotaka, King of Nagas, who in return for services rendered to him, changed his visage and advised him to go to Rituparna, king of Ayodhya. Nala became the charioteer of king Rituparna and with the change in his visage he could not be recognised.

Back in her father's place, Damayanti was pining for her husband. She sent messengers to the courts of various kings to search for him. One of them came back and reported some

comments made by Bahuka, charioteer of king Rituparna. Suspecting that this was Nala, she sent a message to king Rituparna without informing her father. The messenger was asked to tell the king that as Damayanti did not know whether Nala was alive, she was about to hold a second svayamvara on the next day. She knew that it was impossible to cover the long distance in one day and only Bahuka, if he was really Nala, could do it. When Rituparna told this to Bahuka and said that it was impossible to cover the long distance in one day, Bahuka promised to do it and they started. On the way Rituparna taught disguised Nala the art of handling dice skillfully; in return Nala taught him the art of handling horses and how to cover long distances in a short time. Kali, who had troubled him so far, had also left him. When Rituparna arrived at the city of the Vidarbhas, he was surprised to find that no other princes had arrived there. When Bhima asked him why he had undertaken the journey, he had to devise an excuse. In the meantime, Damayanti sent one of her servants to talk to Bahuka and find out who he was. On hearing what Bahuka said, Damayanti's suspicion was strengthened and she interviewed him herself. Nala then revealed himself to her and assumed his old appearance. After residing with Bhima for a while, Nala went back to his kingdom and challenged Pushkara to a second game of dice. With his newly acquired skill, he defeated Pushkara and won back his kingdom and possessions and the couple lived in happiness thereafter.

## Adhyaya - 19

## INFLUENCE OF THE EPIC IN INDIA

As regards the doctrine of the Gita, Dr. Radhakrishnan observes as follows : "When there are so many views of the Gita adopted by able minds, the task of the student is not an easy one. Its bold and brilliant synthesis and reconciliations do not always give us exact information as to how contradictory ideas are to be logically combined. There is no denying the fact that the Gita fosters a life of the spirit. There is a romantic twilight which captures the imagination and uplifts our nature, so long as we are religious minded and do not rely on dogmatic thought.<sup>1</sup> The illustrious commentators of the Gita, however, lost sight of this syncretic approach and tried to prove that it fully endorsed only the philosophical doctrines held by them.

All the commentators claim that they have based their doctrines on the triple canon, the Upanishads, the Gita and the Brahmasutra. Their doctrines can be broadly classified as advaita, dvaitadvaita, vishishtadvaita, dvaita and shuddhadvaita. The paths recommended by them for God realisation may be classified as the path of knowledge, the path of combination of knowledge and action, the path of action or the path of devotion. All of them have brought to bear their

critical intellect on the doctrine of the Gita. All of them possess such skills of exegesis and expression that when we read them, we regard their interpretation as the true message of the Gita. It was, therefore necessary to explain at great length that Lord Krishna taught in the Gita dvividha nishtha or two ways of life, which in the felicitous words of Dandekar, is renunciation of action and inaction. We shall now consider to what extent the views of the great acharyas reflect the views of Lord Krishna as adumbrated in the Gita.

## Advaita Doctrine

The earliest commentator of the Gita is Shri Shankara (7th century A. D.) who has expounded the monistic (advaita) doctrine. According to him the world that we perceive is finite, ephemeral and ever changing. The very effort to see the reality behind this means that this changing panorama of the world is not the ultimate reality. The world is maya, which is relatively true and so is not the ultimate truth. There is only one absolute Reality, Brahman, which appears as the world and the living beings. The world is, therefore, a mere appearance superimposed upon this unchangeable Reality. The aim of Vedanta is to reach beneath the surface of appearances and enquire into the ultimate Reality underlying the macrocosm and microcosm. This ultimate Reality is the same in all beings and is embodied in the most important Vedic saying (mahavakya) : ' You are that, O Shvetaketu. '

The perception of the world appearance, according to Shri Shankara, is due to illusion, maya, which has only a relative existence and is said to be anirvacaniya ie. indefinable. Thus there are only two categories, the category of the real, which is the self-luminous Brahman and the category of the indefinable, which is maya. Maya is said to be indefinable, as one cannot make a positive statement that it exists or a negative statement that it does not exist. Our knowledge of the self is clouded by avidya, ignorance, because of which the individual self is not

1. Dr. Radhakrishnan, Epic Philosophy, p. 531.

able to perceive its unity with the Supreme Brahman and this is the cause of his rebirth. As a result of this ignorance, we attribute to self activity, agency and enjoyment, which properly belong to the not Self. The followers of Shri Shankara differ in their views whether Brahman itself or jointly with maya is the cause of the world. According to Mandanamishra, a direct disciple of Shri Shankara, it is the embodied self ( jiva ), who, in his ignorance created for himself on the eternal Brahman the changing world appearance. This ignorance is destroyed by wisdom, which is attained only when the mind becomes purified by being purged of all passions and desires. This wisdom is, however, not the knowledge gained by the study of scriptures or from a spiritual teacher, but the intuitive experience ( anubhava ) of the formless God.

### **God and Maya**

Now the question arises how the changeless and infinite Brahman can become the finite world itself without undergoing change. Lord Krishna explains this riddle by recourse to his concept of Maya, which Shri Ramanuja explains as real. Nilkantha ( vii.12 ) argues that since the effect is necessarily of the same nature as the cause, the two aspects of Brahman, namely its being the cause of the world and its unchangeability can be reconciled only on the theory of illusory appearance of the world ( Nil. vii.12 ). The Gita further states in ix. 4-5, that the Lord pervades the universe as the space pervades the pots etc. and that he is the originator and sustainer of all beings, affirming at the same time that he does exist in them. Various explanations have been offered by the commentators on this contradiction in terms. According to Shri Shankara, the Lord does not abide in beings, since unlike a gross object he is not in contact with anything being the inmost core of even space and an entity which has no contact with anything cannot be considered as being contained in it on the basis of the illusion theory and says that the Lord in reality does not exist in beings, which are merely imagined, as there cannot be any contact between an imagined thing and its substratum.

### **The Advaita Doctrine :**

We shall now proceed to consider the influence of the Gita in India and abroad. Because of its boldness and logicality the Advaita doctrine of Shri Shankara has exerted a profound and lasting influence upon subsequent Hindu philosophic thought. Shri Shankara has explained his Advaita doctrine succinctly in his Bhashya on the Brahma Sutra 1.1.31. He says there that the absolute has become as the embodied both the agent and the experiencer and that the distinctions that we find among the beings arise from their conditioning factors such as the body and the mind. Judging from the quotations given by him in support of his doctrine, one may safely infer that he has based his doctrine on the earlier upanishads, especially the great passage ( mahavakya ), " That thou art " in the Chhandogya Up. ( VI. 8.7 ). We now proceed to examine whether the Gita supports this view.

The Gita states in ( ix, 5 ), that the Lord pervades the universe as the space pervades the pots etc. and that he is the originator and sustainer of all beings, affirming at the same time that he does not exist in them. Various explanations have been offered by the commentators on this contradiction in terms. According to Shri Shankara, the Lord does not abide in the beings, since unlike a gross object he is not in contact with anything, being the inmost core of even space and an entity which has no contact with anything cannot be considered as contained therein as a receivable. Madhusudana explains it on the basis of the ' illusion theory ' and says that the Lord in reality does not exist in beings, which are merely imagined, as there cannot be any contact between an imagined thing and its substratum. According to Shri Ramanuja ' All beings exist in God, as they are dependent upon him for their existence and regulation of their activities and so are subject to his control. He, however, does not exist in them, not being dependent upon them for his existence. Though he supports them, he does not physically do so as the pot supports the water contained therein, but by his will ' ( RB. ix 4 ). Shridhara says, " The embodied

being sustains and protects the body and while doing so, he becomes attached to it by reason of his ego-consciousness unlike the jiva; the Lord, though bearing and maintaining the beings, does not remain in them, being free from ego-consciousness. ( Shridhara. ix-5 ). But all the explanations, apart from being different, do not at all explain why the Lord should say that he exists in them, but as he transcends them all individually and in their totality, he cannot be said to exist in them wholly. As Dr. Radhakrishnan says, the cosmos is only a partial manifestation of the Absolute ( Bhagavadgita, p. 239 ). There is no limit to his divine manifestation. ( x.40 ) and the Lord sustains the whole creation, pervading it only by a part of himself ( x. 42 ). This concept of the transcendental God runs counter to the Advaita doctrine of Shri Shankara.

Moreover, the Lord states categorically in xv.7 that only a part of himself, mamaivansha, becomes the individual Self in the realm of living beings. There is also another passage in the Gita ( xv.18 ) in which the Lord declares that as the Supreme Person he transcends the mutable ( kshara ) and the immutable ( akshara ). The Sankhyas use these two terms to denote the prakriti and purusha. The word akshara, according to Shri Simananda ( Sankhyasangraha, p.11 ) is employed by the Sankhyas in the sense of the eternal Self. It is also used in the same sense in later upanishads, the Mokshadharma and the Puranas. Shri Shankara, however, takes akshara to mean mayashakti as the elemental seed of the mundane existence, which does not perish ( Sh. B. on Gita xv,16 ). He evidently identifies akshara with maya in order to avoid the implication that the Supreme is higher than the Self. He then explains that Kuta here means ' illusion ' or ' deception ' and that maya is accordingly described as kutastha ie. one that assumes many illusory forms. This is perhaps the only instance in which prakriti has been described by this epithet. As pointed out by

I. Johnston, Early Sankhya, p. 75

Johnston,<sup>1</sup> Kutastha is a recognised epithet of the Self in early as well as classical Sankhya literature. Chapter xv of the Gita starts with a description of the mundane existence in the form of the everchanging ashvattha tree and then the Lord declares that a part of him resorts to the five senses and the mind in order to enjoy sense-objects. These two are evidently referred to as the two purushas with the Lord towering over them. This also explains why God is the Lord of the maya, while the Self, being only his part, is subject to maya.

Shri Shankara interprets the Lord's statement in xv.7 in accordance with the mahavakya tattvam asi ( Chhandogya Up. VI. 8.7 ). Firstly we do not find in the Gita anything comparable to the mahavakya. The nearest we come across is the statement of the Lord in xiii.2; but here too what he says is that he is the kshetrajna in all the bodies. Secondly, in the theory of real variables, an infinite set can contain within itself finite and infinite subsets and so mathematically at least it is possible to conceive of finite and infinite parts of infinity. In any case it is useless to raise doubts as to whether the infinite can produce the finite world without the loss of integrity, because we are told that the whole creation is a divine miracle ( aishvaryoga ), an act of magic ( yogamaya ). We find in the chapter on vibhutis that although the Lord exists in all beings, a greater part of his splendour becomes specially manifest in everything that is glorious, excellent or full of energy ( x.41 ). This would indicate that the distinction that we see among living beings proceeds not merely from the limiting conditions as held by Shri Shankara, but from different endowments of divine consciousness possessed by them. As Dr. Radhakrishnan has beautifully put it, while the individuals are in essence one with the divine, in the world of manifestation each is a partial manifestation of the divine ( The Bhagavatgita, p. 329 ). Each one of us is a ray of this divine consciousness into which he can merge if he only adopts the proper means.

### The Bhedabheda Doctrine

The doctrine of Bhedabheda seems to have existed prior to Shri Shankara, as he refers to a vrittikara, Drāmidacharya and Bhartriprapancha. Anandagiri identifies the vrittikara with Bodhayana. They were followed by Bhaskara, who lived after Shri Shankara, but before Shri Ramanuja and by Nimbarka, who lived sometime after Shri Ramanuja but before Shri Madhva. According to them Brahman is not an undifferentiated mass of consciousness, and though in its causal state it is unity, its evolved form is one of multiplicity. Thus though the evolved forms are different, they are non-different in their causal state. They hold that there is real evolution (parinama); the exponents of this doctrine believe that the world of matter has real existence, but it is essentially of the same nature as Brahman. Brahman becomes jiva, when it is united with the material products, viz. the body, the senses and the mind. The relation between jiva, the world and God is not one of absolute identity, as such a view would be contrary to many shruti passages. Nor are they absolutely different, as this too would be go against some passages in the Upanishads. Both jiva and God are conscious entities and so different from the world of matter. Jiva is different from God, as his knowledge and activity are limited and as he is dependent on the latter.

T. R. Chintamani has published excerpts from the commentary of Bhaskara, who is quoted by Abhinavagupta. According to Bhaskara, the world of matter has real existence, though it is essentially of the same nature as God. Jiva is identical with Brahman, but different from it due to limiting adjuncts. Nimbarka wrote a short commentary on the Brahmasutra. He holds that the universe is a real transformation (parinama) of the subtle nature of God and so cannot be a mere illusion. According to him the number of jivas is infinite, but all of them are guided and governed by God. The difference between jiva and God is compatible with non-difference on the analogy of the sun and its rays or fire and its sparks. According

to Nimbarka, the power (shakti) of Brahman is the material cause of the world but the changes in his power do not affect the integrity of Brahman.

### Vishishtadvaita Doctrine

Shri Ramanuja (11th century A. D.) wrote a commentary on the Gita in accordance with his vishishtadvaita doctrine. His teacher Yamunacharya had demonstrated the existence of God by inference on the lines of the Nyaya system. Ramanuja, however, holds that Ishvara cannot be proved by inference, but has to be acknowledged on the authority of the scriptures. Ishvara, according to Ramanuja, is all-pervading in space and time and so is not only the instrumental but also the material cause of the world. According to this school, the world of matter and individual Selves have real existence of their own and neither of them is essentially the same as Brahman. But they form a unity with Brahman, who is their soul and inner controller (antaryami). Thus Shri Ramanuja's doctrine is a qualified monist doctrine (vishistadvaita) but with this qualification that God exists in manifold modes as souls and matter.

According to Ramanuja, the individual Self is atomic and resides in one part of the body, but spreads his knowledge over the other parts of the body like the rays of a lamp. Thus while both matter and the Selves form the body of God, matter is completely dependent upon him unlike the Selves, who have a freedom of choice. The Self possesses free will in his desires, effort and knowledge, but God helps him to realise his will in the external world. Ignorance (avidya) arises from his association with matter and is the cause of his worldly desires and instincts; when this association breaks up through knowledge, the Self gets rid of avidya and becomes liberated.

The Selves have confined individual existences even after liberation. In the state of dissolution, matter and unliberated Selves remain in a subtle condition in the body of God without

distinction of nature and form. In this state Brahman is said to be in its causal state. When creation takes place, the subtle matter becomes gross and the Selves enter into connection with the material bodies according to their actions in their previous existence. It is then said to be in its effect condition. For God creation of the world is said to be his mere lila or sport, indicating his absolute freedom and joy in the act of creation.

Shri Ramanuja's philosophy is based on a long theistic tradition contained in the theistic upanishads and the Gita. But it is also based on the Pancharatra religion as described in the Narayaniya section of the Mbh., the Vishnu Purana and the Vaishnava agamas of alvars. Shri Ramanuja has tried to establish a philosophical basis for the worship of a personal God and faith in his saving grace without rejecting the ritual of the Vedas.

We do not get more than a hint in the Gita of the doctrine of prapatti, which Shri Ramanuja made the cardinal element of his vishishtadvaita doctrine. Though the Gita does not mention prapatti, it has used its verbal forms, and the word sharana on several occasions. However, the Lord's final exhortation ( XIII.66 ) does give the impression that the Lord finally urged Arjuna to abjure all actions and surrender himself to the divine will. However, it has been established that Krishna had urged Arjuna to fight the Kauravas in the Core ( See BGS, p. 127 ).

### Dvaita Doctrine

Shri Madhava ( 13th century ) founded the dvaita school, though there is reason to believe that this tradition existed prior to him. His followers regard him as an incarnation of the wind-god Vayu, who came to this world to demolish the ' false ' doctrine of Shri Shankara. As a disciple of Achyutapreksha, he had studied the latter's views, but soon abjured advaitism of any kind. He too claims that his doctrine is based on the Vedic texts. His God is Vishnu, who has a body endowed with all supernatural qualities. He does not deny that there are some scriptural texts which point to a Brahman without qualities

such as satyam jnanam anantam brahma, but he says that they are subordinated to other texts which are of a dualistic import. God possesses every kind of perfection and his activity is the result of his overflowing perfection. Although he creates and destroys the world again and again, he is not its material cause, because he asks, how can an unintelligent world be produced by the supreme intelligence ? He is thus transcendent over the world, but he is also immanent since he is the inner ruler ( antaryami ) of all souls. He manifests himself in various forms, incarnates himself periodically and is said to be mystically present in all sacred images.

The world process is real and cannot be regarded as false, for it is never negated in experience. No dialectical reasoning can prove the invalidity of direct and immediate experience which is free from misconception. All arguments that are advanced to prove the falsity of the world will also fall within the world appearance and would be false themselves. He further avers that the Self ( purusha ) is always different from God, as two different things cannot at any time become non-different and vice versa. In Gita ( xv. 7 ): he definitely states that God regards himself as different from the individual Self. He, therefore, insists on a five-fold difference between the God and the Self, between Self and matter, between one Self and another and between one product and another. However, the dualism of Shri Madhava is not an unqualified dualism as is commonly supposed, as the other categories are dependent on God and not independent of him as in the Sankhya and Nyaya systems. According to him the Self has limited knowledge and power and depends upon the guidance of God. The Self is by nature blissful, but experiences pain and suffering because of his connection with the material body. So long as he is not freed from its impurities, he wanders from one existence to another. He attains salvation through the grace of God, which is achieved only through devotion.

### Shuddhadvaita Doctrine :

Shri Vallabha ( 15th century A.D. ) also offers a theistic interpretation of Vedanta known as shuddhadvaita or pure non-dualism. In this he accepts not only the authority of the Upanishads, the Gita and the Brahmasutra, but also the Bhagavata Purana. In his view the scriptures are the final authority and our reason cannot question their dictates. He holds that the whole world, consisting of purushas, kala, prakriti or maya is real and has no separate existence apart from God. God manifests himself of his own will as the individual Selves and the world without undergoing any change in his essential nature. He thus manifests His qualities in them in three different forms in different proportions. He accepts the account of creation in the Brih. Up. that Brahman desired to become many and itself became the individual Selves and the world. Brahman is sat-cit-ananda and becomes whatever it wills by the evolution ( avirbhava ) and involution ( tirobhava ) of qualities. In human and animal souls the quality of ananda is suppressed, while in matter consciousness is also suppressed. This multiplicity, however, does not involve a change but only manifestation. It is for this reason that he holds that Brahman is the samvayikaarana and not the upadana-kaarana, which involves the doctrine of parinama or change. But this samavaya is not the relation of inherence as held by the Nyaya writers, but of identity ( tadatmya ).

Shri Vallabha does not accept that the world is unreal maya. The world is as real and eternal as the Brahman itself and maayaa is nothing but the power of God, ( Ishvara ) which he produces by his free will. Where we go wrong is when we view the plural appearance of the world as an objective and independent reality. This is due to avidya, ignorance, which is located in the human mind. The Self ( jiva ) is of identical essence with God, and there is no real difference between the two as between a spark and fire. The Self is both the doer and the enjoyer and is atomic in size. He, however, pervades the

whole body with his qualities of intelligence, as sandal paste applied to one part is felt all over the body. It is because of avidya that the jiva becomes involved in various activities which constitute living. The jiva is bound by avidya and so cannot attain salvation except through the grace of God, which is gained through devotion ( bhakti ).

We shall now examine to what extent these views of the great acaryas are based on the teaching of Lord Krishna. The word maayaa occurs in the Bhagvadgita in vii. 14 and 15 and in compound form yogamaya in vii. 25. In xviii.61. Lord Krishna states that the God is in the heart of all beings and makes them move like puppets through His maayaa. Here Shri Shankara himself explains maayaa as delusion, while Shridhar takes it to mean His mysterious power. Lord Krishna, according to Shri Shankara specifically refers to the delusive power of maya in vii.15. Shri Ramanuja takes maayaa as a synonym of wisdom according to Nirukta iii.9 and states that the Lord takes birth by his own will and induces a person to self-indulgence and so this world deluded by his maayaa does not recognise God whose essential nature is infinite bliss.<sup>1</sup> Apart from this delusive power, there is nothing in the use of the word maayaa to indicate that the term is used in the sense of illusion. Shri Shankara himself declares His vishvarupa as the divine Vaishnava form, endowed with knowledge, majesty, strength, power, vigour and splendour.<sup>2</sup>

In the introduction to his Gitabhashya, Shri Shankara says, "The dharma revealed in the Vedas is of two kinds, the one characterised by action, the other by renunciation. The main purport of the Gita is liberation characterised by the complete cessation of the cycle of rebirths together with all its causes. And this results from the path consisting of dedication to knowledge preceded by renunciation. That dharma which is

1. RB. vii.14

2. SB. xi. 3

characterised by action is primarily meant for achieving prosperity and attaining heaven, and yet when it is performed in an attitude of dedication to God without hankering after selfish ends, it brings about purification of the mind. When the mind is purified, it eventually leads to the knowledge of the Self and then becomes the cause of liberation. Thus while conceding that the Lord has declared a two-fold nishtha, Shankaracharya says that the path of knowledge takes precedence over the path of action, as the former is mentioned first. In fact, he goes a step further and says that the Yoga of knowledge is the true Yoga,<sup>1</sup> and what is known as karmayoga is figuratively spoken of as yoga as it leads to jnanayoga. Shridhara also says that there can be no option between the two paths, as the path of action is subsidiary to the path of knowledge.

In his advaita doctrine Shri Shankara lays emphasis on the intuitive knowledge of God and so accords only a supplementary role to devotion as an aid to the attainment of knowledge through the grace of God. In the case of later acharyas, however, the emphasis shifts to devotion and it is held that God can be realised only through bhakti. However, in the early stages of the Vedanta schools, this devotion is required to be based on the knowledge of God or the observance of the duties enjoined by the scriptures. In his introductory remarks to the Gitabhashya, Shri Ramanuja says that the Lord, in order to induce Arjuna to fight, proclaims the way of realising God through the path of devotion fostered by the way of knowledge or the way of action. He evidently takes the dvividha to refer to the two-fold dedication to devotion instead of knowledge. This view does not seem valid, as it does not accord with the Lord's statement later that he brings about the liberation of his devotees by granting them buddhiyoga (x.10).

1. parmarthayogah sa eva, SB. V.6

Shri Ramanuja, in his commentary of the Gitarthasangraha of Yamunacharya (verse 2) admits that self-realisation may be achieved by the path of action followed by the path of knowledge as taught in adhyaya ii of the Gita. He adds that it can be attained through karmayoga containing within itself an element of jnanayoga as taught in adhyayas iii and iv. But he says that such knowledge cannot be gained unless action is destroyed through work undertaken in a spirit of dedication to God. In the later works, however, he seems to have come to hold the view that one cannot achieve liberation without taking refuge in God (prapatti) or complete self-surrender to God (sharanagati), without which one cannot gain the grace of God. According to Shri Ramanuja the Lord has told Arjuna to work for him alone.<sup>1</sup> Shri Ramanuja includes in this work (matkarma) not only singing his praise, offering prayers, muttering his name, making rounds of the temples, but also renovation of existing temples and building of new temples. It is surprising that the Lord should say this after declaring that he does not demand elaborate and expensive rites and works from his devotees.

Abhinavagupta, however, regards matkarma as equivalent to Bhagavata dharma such as puja, japa, svaadhyaya, homa etc. That the Gita contains the quintessence of the Bhagavata dharma is clear from the stanzas ix. 14 and x. 9. In the former the Lord says that the devotees worship him by singing his praises, observing firm vows and bowing down to him with devotion, while in the latter he adds, they rejoice in conversing with one another and enlightening one another about him, with all their thoughts fixed on him and dedicating their lives wholly to him. Madhusudana takes matkarma to mean the bhagavata dharma consisting of the hearing and singing His praises etc. (xii. 10). But apart from these passages there is nothing in the Gita to support the view that matkarma meant the minefield devotion of the bhagavata

1. matkarmaparamo bhava xi-55

dharma. At least two elements, padasevana and dashya of the ninefold bhakti are not to be found in the Gita. The term Bhagavata itself seems to have came into vogue later as it is not mentioned in the Critical Edition: It is, however, certain that the Bhagavata dharma drew its inspiration from the above passages in the Gita, spread in the second century B.C. and became popular before first century A. D.

According to Shri Madhva, moksha cannot be attained without bhakti, which is a state of loving attachment to God, born of knowledge. While bhakti operates as sadhanaa or preparation in its early stages, it is also the sadhya or its own fulfillment. Ritual work has to be undertaken with devotion, but without desire for its fruit. Without bhakti even the meticulous performance of religious duties will not save a person from hell, but he can be saved through devotion even if he is the worst sinner. Shri Madhva speaks of three different types of devotees; those who are destined to attain salvation, those who pass from one birth to another, and the most wicked who are consigned to hell. Besides them there are the demoniacal, who bear deep hatred towards God and cannot hope under any circumstances to attain salvation. This doctrine of eternal damnation is to be found only in the system of Shri Madhva.

Shri Vallabha does not accept the world as unreal maayaa. The world is as real and eternal as the Brahman itself and maayaa is nothing but the power which Ishvara produces by his free will. Where we go wrong is when we view the plural appearance of the world as an objective and independent reality. This is due to avidya, which is located in the mind of man. The purusha is of identical essence with God and there is no real difference between the two as between a spark and the fire. The Self is both the doer and the enjoyer and is atomic in size. He, however, pervades the whole body with his quality of intelligence, even as sandal paste applied to one part is felt all over the body. It is because of avidya that the purusha becomes

involved in various activities which constitute living. The purusha bound by avidya cannot attain salvation except through the grace of God, which is gained only through devotion.

Shri Vallabha also holds that avidya by which the embodied Self is bound cannot be destroyed without the grace of God, which is gained only through bhakti or premaa, which is intense love for God, which exists in a seed form in every person. This seed grows and becomes a strong plant, when one worships Lord Krishna, following one's class duties, with complete absorption of the mind. It is only when this love of God develops into a passion (vyasana) that one attains emancipation easily. This passion for God, by which the devotee is unable to subsist without God is the deepest manifestation of bhakti. Shri Vallabha regards bhakti as the means and the goal of life, which is even better than moksha, as with it a devotee becomes an associate of God through perfect love for him, with a body fitted for the service of God. This is known as pushtimarga, which depends wholly on the grace of God and not on the performance of any Vedic duties.

Among the modern commentators Shri Jnandeva, the great saint of Alandi (Maharashtra) (13th century B. C.) began as a hathayogi of the Natha sampradaya, practiced the way of knowledge and bhakti and became a jnanibhakta. His Bhavarthadipika popularly known as Jnaneshvari is a unique commentary on the Gita in exquisite poetry in old Marathi. He was a gifted poet, who could explain the most abstruse philosophical thoughts in beautiful diction by the use of similes, metaphors and illustrations. He told Arjuna that he had narrated the Gita to him to explain the way of disinterested action. This is clear from his commentary on verse iii.3. When Arjuna asked Krishna as to why after extolling the superiority of knowledge over action to him, he was urging him to take part in a destructive war, the latter told him that his object was to explain only the path of action to him and that he had only incidentally referred

to the sankhya doctrine. This view as coming from a saint who had renounced the world at a very early age and had attained the height of knowledge and devotion is truly remarkable and deserves consideration. He regards svadharma, one's duty, as a nityayajna, as an obligatory sacrifice. He says that if one undertakes it in that spirit, one does not incur sin. It is only when a person abandons his duty and engages in misdeeds, he is caught in the cycle of rebirth. Work in the furtherance of one's duty is continuous worship of God and does not lead to bondage. It is only because people fail in the performance of their duty that they get caught in the net of maya and are bound by their actions ( iii.9 ). He adds that if a person discharges his duty according to his entitlement, he attains to liberation without doubt.<sup>1</sup> While he should do his work without attachment to his actions and their results, he should not perform them indifferently but with fortitude and zeal.<sup>2</sup> In short, he should perform his duty without expectation of a reward and remain poised in the quality of satva, until he attains purity of the mind. After the purification of his mind, he has a choice before him; he can espouse renunciation or continue to perform his duty as before. He should then practice meditation, which is an internal aid to jnanyoga or buddhiyoga. Shri Jnandeva practiced jnanyoga with bhakti and became a jnani-bhakta.

Among the modern commentators, Lokmanya Tilak ( 1856-1920 ) published his world-famous book, the *Gita Rahasya*<sup>3</sup> in 1915. In it he argues that the view of Shri Shankara about the primacy of jnanayoga is based on the Upanishads rather than the Gita. This is clearly untenable as Arjuna had sought the advice of Krishna on his dilemma whether he should take part in the war or renounce the world. It was, therefore, necessary for Krishna to describe both the paths and explain to him why he

1. Jnaneshvari, v.8

2. Jnaneshvari, xviii.6

3. *Gita Rahasya*, translated by B. S. Sukthankar, Vol. I. ( Poona, 1935 ) pp. xxv, xxvi

thought the path of action was more suitable to him ( Arjuna ). There are also passages in the Gita which clearly apply to a monk. In xii.19 Lord Krishna also refers to a yogi who is taciturn, content with whatever comes his way and homeless. He further describes the spiritual disciplines which a man of knowledge must undergo in his novitiate in xii. 7-11. The description of sthitaprajna given at the end of adhyaya iv, 54-72 also clearly applies to a man of knowledge. Krishna also declares in unequivocal terms that a person perfected in karmayoga also attains liberation in due course. ( iv-38 ). He says that though the Gita deals also with both jnanyoga and bhaktiyoga, they are subservient to karmayoga. He further adds just as the air we breathe is a mixture of oxygen, hydrogen and other gases, so in the Gita all these three yogas are blended into one, with karmayoga having a primacy over the other two. He says that the Gita enjoins action even after liberation while living and that the liberated Self then serves God by serving the world as the instrument of the divine will. He was, however, fully conscious that social service, including humanitarian work was not the end of life and was of no use to him as it did not lead to self-realisation.<sup>1</sup>

Prof. Max Muller was the first among the Western philosophical scholars, who came to enquire about the power, which brought about the sudden and momentous changes in the life of the Keshab Chandra Sen, the great Brahmo Samaj leader. Max Muller wrote an article on Shri Ramakrishna in the Nineteenth Century and first brought him to the notice of the world., Swami Vivekananda described Max Muller as an extraordinary man, a vedantist among vedantists' When Swami Vivekananda went to see him along with Mrs. Sturdy, the Professor invited them to lunch and even saw them off at the railway station, saying that 'it was not every day that one met a disciple of Ramakrishna Paramahansa.' It is really surprising

1. BGS, p. 83, BGS, pp. 118, 119, 121

that while others were puzzled and amused at what they considered the strange behavior of Ramakrishna in observing brahmacharya after getting married and forcing it on his young wife, it was left to a foreign professor to realise his saintly qualities. When reports reached his wife Sharada that her husband had become 'insane' she went to see him to find out the truth for herself. She too happened to be a pure and noble soul and was able to appreciate her husband's spiritual temperament and aspiration. She promptly told him that she did not wish to drag him down to a life of worldliness and all that she desired was to serve him and become a partner in his 'sadhanaa'. Coming from the lips of a teen-ager, it was extraordinary. Shri. Ramakrishna then practised renunciation and meditation and became a paramhansa, which is the highest stage in jnanyoga and Sharada Ma became a saint in her own right by practicing the yoga of action as a dharmapatni.

As Swami Vevekananda further says, he came to know from his Master the wonderful truth that the religions of the world are not antagonistic but the phases of one eternal religion.<sup>1</sup> Ramakrishna Paramahans had a burning desire to know the truth about other religions. So he sought a teacher of every religion, 'not a book-worm, or a philosophical scholar, but a person, who had realised the truth at first hand. He found a Mohammedan sage and went to live with him. After he underwent the disciplines prescribed by him, he found to his astonishment that the devotional methods, when faithfully carried out, led him to the same goal. He gathered similar experience when he stayed and watched a Christian sage following the true religion of Jesus Christ. He went to all the sects he could find, did exactly what he was told and in every instance he arrived at the same truth. Thus from actual experience, he came to know that every religion is trying to reach the same goal, the difference being largely in the method and still more the language. This is how Swami Ramakrishna

Paramahansa (1836-1886) started as a devotee of Kali, became a jnani-bhakta and taught that social and humanitarian service was also a form of divine service. His disciple, Swami Vivekanand (1863-1902) not only established the Ramakrishna Math, but also the Ramakrishna Mission, adopting the motto for the liberation of the Self and welfare of world (atmano moksharttham jagadhitayaca). Thus while knowledge (jnana) is the supreme means of liberation, so is disinterested work coupled with devotion to God and humanitarian service to God's creatures.

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948)<sup>1</sup> tells us that the Gita calls upon everyone to dedicate himself to selfless duty and not to become a mental voluptuary to desires and impulses. He says that it teaches us that we have a right to action alone and success or failure does not matter as both are the same at the bottom. He attached greater value to anasakti or non-attachment. The mahatma says that 'anasakti' is the central sun round which revolve the three planets of devotion, knowledge and works'. He also felt that such perfect non-attachment was not possible without perfect observance of non-violence and truth. If we analyse his conception of anasakti, we find that it emphasizes three elements namely (1) disinterested action, (2) dedication of all actions to God, and (3) surrendering to God, body, mind and soul. In this way, says the mahatma, man can transform his body into the temple of God. The fast undertaken by him for the eradication of untouchability by effecting a change of heart among the classes (varnas) had become famous throughout the world. The Christian missionaries have been doing good work for improving the lot of the untouchables, but Hindu extremists such as the sangha parivara attributed their efforts as being devoted to direct or indirect proselytization. It is difficult to blame the Christian missionaries or the converts to christianity who used to receive nothing but contempt of Hindus or ill treatment from the three

1. Ibid. pp. 169-170

1. Geeta Rahasya tr. by B. S. Sukthankar, Vol. I (Poona 1935), pp.xxv-xxvi

classes of Hindus. The only way to stop such conversions is to accord them equal rights, care and attention as they received in early times even in the Hindu fold.

Shri. Arbindo Ghosh ( 1872-1950 ) holds that the Gita is not a book on the ethics but spiritual life and does not teach us disinterested action. According to him all actions should be undertaken for the sake of the attainment of God and we must abandon all duties for his sake and surrender ourself to him, heart and soul. Dr. Ranade<sup>1</sup> quotes a beautiful passage from Shri Arbindo, which succinctly explains his view-point in this regard :

"The Gita is not a book of ethics but spiritual life. It teaches us not human but divine action; not the disinterested performance of social duties but the abandonment of all standards of duty (sarvadharma) to take refuge in the Supreme alone; not social service but the action of the Good-possessed, the Master men and the sacrifice to him who stands behind Men and Nature<sup>2</sup>, thus rising to the finale of Supreme Self surrender to the Master of Existence."

Shri Aurobindo advises that one should relinquish even social and humanitarian work for the sake of God and should surrender oneself to him heart and soul. He seems to have based this view on the Lords' final exhortation ( xvii. 66 ) to Arjuna to abandon all duties and take shelter in him alone. It seems strange that after extolling the path of action to Arjuna throughout, the Lord should conclude with the advice to give up action all together. This advice would have suited Arjuna very well, as he wanted to avoid the destructive war at any cost. That he did not take it in that sense is clear from the fact that he decided to accept the advise of the Krishna to fight. The phrase sarvaadharman parityajya, therefore, means not renunciation of actions but the abandonment of their fruit ( phalatyajya ). Shri

Ramanuja takes parityajya to mean ‘renouncing the fruit and agency of action’ as taught in xviii. 9-11. Shri Madhva also states that the renunciation of dharma here means the relinquishment of their fruit. The statistical study also shows that the verse xviii. 66 in the Mbh. as it has been added later,<sup>1</sup> differs significantly from the style of Sauti.

1. Ranade, The Bhagavadgita, Nagpur, 1959, p. 173.

2. Essays on the Bhagavadgita, p. 43

1. The mean square of xvii. 66 is 306.5 with variance 34.06 d. f. 9 and seems to have been added by another author in the first century A. D. See ROG. p. 277

Adhyaya - 20

## **INFLUENCE OF THE EPIC ABROAD**

The Mahabharata has been cherished by the Hindus from the long past as a cultural heritage, as it contains a record of the social, political and cultural changes that took place in the Aryavarta in the ancient times. It has also come to be regarded as 'one of the most inspiring monuments of the world and an inexhaustible mine for the investigation of the religion, mythology, philosophy, law, custom and political and social institutions of ancient India.' The Mahabharata came to the notice of the Western scholars through the translations into English of the Bhagvadgita and the Shakuntala episode contained in it by Charles Williams in 1758 and 1795. Franz Bopp, the father of comparative philosophy published a Latin translation of the Nala-Damayanti episode from the Mahabharata in 1819. He had expressed the view as early as 1829 that all the parts of the epic did not belong to the same age, which is now borne out by the statistical studies undertaken by the author.

Although the studies of Vedas and Sanskrit literature were undertaken by Western scholars such as William Jones, Colebrooke and the brothers Schlegel, the credit of taking up studies as a thoroughly sober investigation goes to Franz Bopp,

the founder of a new science, comparative philology. He published his book on the "Conjugation System" in 1816, in which he gave as an appendix metrical translations of some episodes from the original text of the Mahabharata. He then singled out from this epic the beautiful story of Nala and his devoted wife Damayanti and made it universally accessible by means of a good critical edition with a Latin translation. A number of other episodes from the Mahabharata were translated by him into German and were published by him. Bopp also published a translation into German of Matsyopakhyana ( Mbh. III-185 ) and Savitryupakhyana ( III-277-283-287 ).<sup>1</sup>

The Critical study of the Mbh., as stated by Pusalkar ( p.8 ) may be said to have begun with Lassen ( 1839 ), who followed Bopp. After subjecting the epic to a critical analysis, he endorsed the view of Bopp and expressed his conviction that the Mbh. is made up of parts belonging to different periods. He considered the epic as recited by Shaunaka as a second recension of the poem, which is referred to by Ashvalayana in his Grihyasutra ( iii-4.4 ). He placed Ashvalayana in 350 B. C. and assuming the identity of his mentor Shaunaka with the reciter of the epic, Lassen took the date of the second recension to be about 450 or 400 B. C. According to him the epic was further expanded by interpolations of a Krishnite nature alone and the epic excluding these accretions was pre-Buddhist. Sukthankar rightly criticises the elimination of the Krisnite element as ‘ a serious operation, which removed all the vital elements of a living organism and left only a mangled cadaver lacking the vital elements. ’

A. Weber in 1882 and A. Ludwig in 1884 made an attempt to show an organic connection between the Vedic sources and the epic material. According to them the historical kernel of the epic has been provided by the war of the Bharatas with the

<sup>1.</sup> Winternitz, HIL, pp. 16f, 394n, 399n.

confederation of the five tribes and the epic poet has constructed on this feeble historical germ an allegorical poem on the light of the Sun and the darkness of the night. As pointed out by Sukthankar ( pp. 25-26 ) in this season myth of Ludwig, the Pandavas symbolise the five seasons and Draupadi, their common spouse, is the dark earth possessed alternately by the five seasons. In time these seasons lose their wealth and the hoarded gold ( i.e. their lustre and splendour ) in the fatal game of dice with base Duryodhana, until at last their common wife Krishnaa is left in possession of one single garment ( i.e. the earth became bare i. e. denuded in winter ). All this may be granted, but one fails to see why anyone should take the trouble to compose a seasonal myth comprising one lakh stanzas. The Statistical Study has shown that the war had taken place in the ancient times between the Kauravas and Pandavas, as the Vaishampayana text contains only the story of the Bharata war and nothing else.

Another Scandinavian scholar Soren Sorensen made a significant effort at reconstructing the original epic between 1883 and 1894. He is the author of the excellent work Index to the names in the Mahabharata ( London, 1904. 19.23 ), which is indispensable to a serious student of the great epic. According to him, its oldest form was a saga, the work of a single author, which had no contradictions, no repetition and no digression. By rejecting from the Vulgate text episodes and didactic digressions he obtained at first a text of some 27,000 stanzas, which is nearly the size of the Vaishampayana text. But he thought that even this extract included spurious materials belonging to different epochs. By carrying out the process still further, he declared that the original epic contained near about 8000 verses, which is strangely near the number of Kutashlokas of Vyasa mentioned in the oft-quoted verse in the epic. Sukthankar has, however, rejected this stanza in his Critical Edition as he found it to be a patent interpolation in some very late Devanagari manuscripts.

Theories analogous to the inversion theory have been expressed by L. Von Shroeder and Grierson, who remodelled his theory and gave it the following shape. Shroeder stated that the original poem was composed by the bards of the Kurus and belonged to the period between the seventh and the fourth century B. C. They depicted the Kauravas as models of virtue and their overthrow by the Pandavas, an ignoble race of invaders. They eulogised Brahmaa, the tribal God of the Kurus and depreciated Krishna, the tribal god of the invaders, resulting in the inversion of the original epic poem. Grierson has suggested that the struggle for supremacy between the brahmins and kshatriyas was the principal motive for the inversion of the original epic. The Kauravas of Madhyadesha who supported the brahmins, came into conflict with the unorthodox Panchala-Pandava kshatriyas. With regard to Shroeder's theory, Dandekar observes that the conflict between the cult of the Brahmaa and the cult of Krishna is almost unknown in the religious history of India.<sup>1</sup> As regards Grierson's theory, Keith has pointed out that there is no proof for any conflict between brahmins and kshatriyas during this period ( Pusalkar, p-10 ).

Later Adolph Holtzman ( 1881 ) pointed out the inherent contradiction between the avowed purpose of the epic, namely to demonstrate the triumph of righteousness and the deceit and subterfuges employed by the Pandavas to slay the redoubtable Kaurava warriors. He, therefore, studied the epic from various angles and arrived at the following reconstruction of the epic as summarised by Held ( Sukthankar, p. 4 ) : Right back in the most ancient times there was a gild of court singers who extolled in their professional poetry the mighty deeds of their monarchs. Then came a talented poet who composed in honour of the renowned race of the Kauravas the original epic, a poem in praise of a great Buddhist ruler, perhaps Ashoka. But now the new teaching coming into conflict with the growing

1. Dandekar, UCR, XII - 73

pretensions of the brahmins, began to decline and the priests converted the popular poem to their own use, but reversed the original purpose of the work as a whole. Now it is no longer the Kauravas who are lauded, but their very adversaries, the Pandavas to whom a decided predilection for the brahmanical doctrine is ascribed. The epic is then subjected to a further revision : Buddhism is eliminated altogether, both Vishnu and Krishna are thrust into the foreground, the epic is assimilated to the ancient and sacred chronicles of the Puranas and portions of a didactic character are interpolated. And in this revised and irreconcilably altered recension, the epic was non-existent until the twelfth century A. D. Hopkins styled this theory as inversion theory, as the original poem was completely inverted or as one author has expressed it ' set upon its head '.

The inversion theory of the Holtzman, though supported by Lassen, Winternitz and J. J. Meyer did not find favour with eminent scholars, such as Barth, Sylvan Levi, Pischel, Jacobi, Oldenberg and Hopkins. As pointed out by Sukthankar the Kauravas were just as unscrupulous as the Pandavas. They hatched a plot to burn the Pandavas alive in a house of lac. They conspired to send ten men the Samshaptakas to attack Arjuna. If the Pandavas employed subterfuges to slay Bhishma, Drona, Karna, Jayadratha and Duryodhana, they did so to save their skin by taking recourse to apaddharma. As observed by Hertel, the manual about the conduct of princes permitted the use of artifice in the case of emergencies.<sup>1</sup> But there was no such justification for the cold-blooded massacre by Ashvathama of the Panchala and Pandava warriors while asleep after the day's battle was over. When Ashvathama went to Duryodhana and reported his action to him, he did not upbraid him for his cowardly act, but said that he had achieved what Bhishma, his father and Karna could not achieve. Vaishampayana has not tried to defend the Kauravas or

Pandavas, but has portrayed the war in all its gruesome aspects. But he definitely states that the victory of the Pandavas was the triumph of righteousness ( dharma ). He must have evidently felt that the actions of the Pandavas came within the definition of apaddharma, as they were committed in the interest of self-preservation.

Thereafter Joseph Dahalman published his important work in 1899 just about the time when Holtzman's last volume appeared. Contrary to the views of other western scholars, he propounded a view of the origin and character of the epic, which Hopkins styled the synthetic view. Dahalmann holds that the Mbh. is the work of a single inspired poet, who welded together the pre-existing narrative and didactic elements artistically with a view to popularising dharmashastra among the masses. According to him the feud between the Pandavas and the Kauravas is not based on historical facts, but they merely represent the personifications of dharma and adharma. Its date according to him is not later than the fifth century B. C. i.e. pre-Buddhist, as the epic depicts the state of culture represented by the Jatakas. He holds that the epic is not a haphazard compilation of disjointed and incoherent units, but a well-defined unity, a synthesis of all the aspects of dharma in the widest sense of the term. According to him, the idea that there was an epic core, which gradually became encrusted with didactic accretions is nothing more than a fantasy of a modern critic. This theory, however, does not explain the role of Krishna, who looms large in the epic as the friend of the Pandavas and as the promulgator of the Bhagavadgita.

As stated by Sukthankar ( p. 22 ), the pendulum had clearly swung to the other extremes. Both Jacobi and A Barth have subjected Dahlmann's view to very impartial searching criticisms. While admitting the unity of the plan and aim of the epic, they demur to his contention that the story of the epic was invented merely for illustrating the maxims of dharma. They were also not inclined to accept the date proposed by Dahlmann

1. Hertel, WZKM, xxiv - p. 421

for the composition of the epic. Jacobi treats the Mbh. from a synthetical point of view that a team of diascuasts added the didactic matter all at one time to the older epical corpus preserved by the Sutas. He assigns the corpus of the poem to the pre-Archaedian period and its present form to a time not later than the second or third century B. C. ( Pusalkar, p. 14 ). A. Barth ( Pusalkar ) also agrees and says that the Mbh. is unmistakably a uniform work. In regard to the unifying factor and didactic matter in the epic, Levi traces the didactic teachings to a kshatriya manual based on the moral code found in the Bhagavadgita and its central purpose was to glorify Krishna and rally the kshatriyas in his service.<sup>1</sup>

The analytical school which was started by Lassen, Weber, Ludvig and Sorensen reached its culmination in the researches of the great American indologist E. W. Hopkins. Hopkins was the first to examine the origin and the character of the epic by the analytical method in his *The Great Epic of India* ( pp. 397-398 ). As his views have found general acceptance among scholars, it is necessary to consider them in some detail. His conclusions are that on metrical grounds it is impossible to believe that the epic in its present form is older than the second century B. C. ( Hopkins, p. 239 ). The development of the epic in its present form according to Hopkins is as follows. The epic began with a collection of Bharata lays in which the Pandavas did not figure. The epic in its present form without the didactic matter was composed in 400-200 B. C. after the invasion of Alexander, in which the Pandavas are the heroes and Krishna is a demi-god. During the period 300 B. C. to 100 or 200 A. D., the epic story came to be expanded by the addition of new episodes and didactic material and the epic was practically completed. Some material came to be added later in 200 A. D. to 400 A. D. Hopkins also describes Krishna as a tribal God who arose among the polyandrous Pandavas. As Altekar ( p.

1. BCV - pp. 99 - 196, English Tradition, ABORI - I - p. 13-20

110 ) has pointed out, there are no grounds for holding that the Pandavas were a wild tribe or Krishna was a patron god of any Kuru clan. It has been already established that Krishna was a tribal god of the Vrishni clan. Hopkins was the first epic scholar, who made an attempt to distinguish between the different metrical strata in the epic. Edgerton had referred to some such instances in his paper. However, Hopkins conclusions are based on the subjective interpretation of the metrical data and the Vulgate and will have to be corrected on the basis of the Critical Edition and the findings of the statistical study made by the author.